United Nations A/64/687

General Assembly

Distr.: General
2 March 2010

Original: English

Sixty-fourth session
Agenda item 111 (h)
Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of fourteen members of the Human Rights Council

Letter dated 22 February 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Thailand to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

It gives me great pleasure to inform you that the Royal Thai Government has decided to present its candidature for membership in the Human Rights Council for the term 2010-2013 at the elections to be held on 13 May 2010 in New York.

In this regard, the Royal Thai Government has the honour to submit herewith Thailand's voluntary pledges and commitments to the promotion and protection of human rights in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251. I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Assembly.

(*Signed*) Norachit **Sinhaseni**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

10-25565 (E) 180310

Please recycle

Annex to the letter dated 22 February 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Thailand to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Thailand's commitments, voluntary pledges and contributions to the promotion and protection of human rights: election to the Human Rights Council for the term 2010-2013

1. Thailand seeks its first-time membership in the Human Rights Council for the term 2010-2013. On this occasion, the Royal Thai Government would like to present information on its pledges, commitments and contributions to human rights, as follows:

A. Thailand's commitments and pledges

2. As a member of the Human Rights Council in the period 2010-2013, Thailand is committed to advancing the cause of human rights at the national, regional and international levels.

3. At the national level, Thailand will:

- Strengthen efforts to promote and protect human rights through, inter alia, supporting the work of the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand, which is committed to fully exercising its power under the Constitution to advance the cause of human rights in the country while fully retaining its independent status.
- Strengthen the implementation of all human-rights-related legislation and policies and expedite the review and amendment of various pieces of legislation that contain discriminatory elements, in particular those concerning the rights of vulnerable groups, the elimination of violence against women and children, the equal status of persons with disabilities and the basic rights of marginalized groups.
- Strengthen law enforcement in line with international human rights standards and norms, particularly through the promotion of human rights education and training among law enforcement officers and security personnel.
- Promote human rights education in all types of education and at all levels both in schools and in higher academic institutions, in accordance with the World Programme for Human Rights Education and its plan of action.
- Strengthen the justice system and the rule of law to ensure fairness and non-discrimination while preventing impunity.
- Continue to strengthen interfaith dialogue, emphasizing respect for diversity and enhancement of reconciliation, cooperation and social harmony.
- Strengthen efforts to promote and protect the basic rights of the poor, particularly the right to health, to education and to equal access to justice, as well as their community rights.
- Strengthen the implementation of the National Action Plan on Human Rights and the effectiveness of its monitoring mechanism and follow-up processes.

- Continue active engagement and dialogue with civil society and encourage public participation to enhance human rights and promote a democratic environment in the country.
- Expedite efforts towards the withdrawal of the country's reservations in respect of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
- Pursue feasibility studies and other efforts towards becoming a party to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.
- Pursue feasibility studies and other efforts towards becoming a party to relevant conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO), in particular Convention No. 87 concerning Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise, Convention No. 98 concerning the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining and Convention No. 111 concerning Discrimination in respect of Employment and Occupation.
- Cooperate and work closely with United Nations treaty bodies and intensify efforts to implement their recommendations and ensure the timely submission of national reports under the human rights instruments to which Thailand is a party.

4. At the regional level, Thailand will:

- Strengthen its active contribution to the development of the Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children to effectively promote and protect the human rights of people in the ASEAN region.
- Promote regional dialogue and cooperation for the promotion and protection of human rights through various relevant forums.
- Raise awareness of the principles and importance of human security.
- Strengthen its cooperation with neighbouring countries to combat human trafficking and human smuggling, in particular their impacts on vulnerable groups, and continue to offer technical assistance in building capacities of Governments in the region to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities.

5. At the international level, Thailand will:

- Remain actively and constructively engaged in the work of the Human Rights Council and support the fulfilment of its mandate and functions, in particular through its mechanisms for assisting States to advance the cause of human rights; addressing gross violations of human rights in a non-selective manner; raising public awareness of human rights; and promoting human rights worldwide.
- Continue constructive dialogue on human rights issues with all countries in the various forums of the United Nations, in a spirit of cooperation and mutual respect.

- Support the universal periodic review so that it becomes an effective mechanism for improving human rights situations on the ground.
- Engage constructively and work closely with the Human Rights Council in respect of its special procedures.
- Continue to cooperate with all countries to promote and protect the rights of women, children and persons with disabilities in compliance with relevant international instruments.
- Continue to promote gender equality and to cooperate with all relevant stakeholders to combat violence against women in all its forms, including human trafficking, sexual discrimination and discrimination against women prisoners.
- Foster and support international dialogue on democracy, human security and interfaith and intercultural dialogue to increase understanding, tolerance and reconciliation among faiths, cultures and traditions; and continue to foster the global partnership for development, building on Thailand's role in various bilateral, subregional and regional cooperation frameworks, with a view to promoting the realization of the right to development beyond Thailand.

B. Thailand's contributions on human rights

1. Freedom and liberty: core values enshrined in the Constitution

6. Thailand has a rich history as a land of freedom and has always embraced the value of diversity. Thailand was among the first 48 countries to endorse the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on 10 December 1948. The Royal Thai Government respects freedom and liberty of the people and has striven to promote and protect human rights as stipulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This is evident in the 2007 Constitution, which contains the principles of the Universal Declaration, of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

7. The Constitution enshrines human dignity as well as the rights and liberties of people. It ensures that people are equal before the law and shall enjoy equal protection under the law. Indeed, it specifies that "Unjust discrimination against a person on the grounds of difference in origin, race, language, sex, age, disability, physical or health condition, personal status, economic or social standing, religious belief, education or constitutional political view, shall not be permitted". It also guarantees that the exercise of State power must be undertaken with regard to human dignity and the rights and liberties of people. The provision on rights and liberties in the Constitution can be directly invoked to bring a lawsuit in case of human rights violations.

2. Human rights: national agenda of the Royal Thai Government

8. The Royal Thai Government has declared human rights as one of the top priorities on its national agenda, to be pursued vigorously and seriously to ensure that justice, non-discrimination and fair treatment under the rule of law will be accorded to all groups of people. This policy of the Royal Thai Government has created an environment conducive to the promotion and protection of human rights

in the country. It provides clear guidance for all relevant officials to undertake their duties to promote and protect the rights of people.

9. In pursuing Thailand's human rights policy, the Government has actively promoted human rights education, in particular during the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Year of Human Rights Learning. One notable project is the "Thailand Human Rights Caravan", an initiative developed jointly by Thailand and the United Nations country team to promote and disseminate knowledge about human rights among the general public, especially children in schools across the country.

10. Human rights education for law enforcement officers has also been promoted. Several human rights training activities have been organized for the armed forces and police academy focusing on how to translate international human rights obligations into more effective implementation in the context of security operations. In 2009, the Royal Thai Army, for the first time, developed a human rights manual and human rights soldier cards to be distributed to armed forces personnel.

3. Democracy: a political and social order for the realization of human rights

11. The Royal Thai Government has a strong commitment to democratic values, in the firm belief that a democratic system can best ensure the people's rights and freedoms. The Government is enhancing a democratic environment based on the principles of the rule of law, transparency, accountability, good governance and public participation, and on the enforcement of laws on the basis of equality, justice, righteousness and universally accepted norms. Equal treatment and reconciliation of opposing views is also high on the national agenda. Political differences are normal and tolerated as long as they are under the rule of law. With such democratic development, the Thai people are assured that they can attain the full enjoyment of their rights and freedoms in society without any discrimination.

12. Internationally, Thailand is among the founding members of the Asia Pacific Democracy Partnership and continues to participate in the Community of Democracies, underlining that democracy is not only about elections but also about the real participation of the people. We focus on education and on cultivating a culture of democracy to ensure that democratic development will be advanced by the people themselves.

4. National mechanisms: avenues for protecting and redressing human rights violations

13. The National Human Rights Commission of Thailand was set up under the 1997 Constitution as an independent mechanism, comprised of representatives of civil society and the public sector, to proactively monitor and protect human rights. The Commission's main duty is to examine and report to the Government the commission or omission of acts, in both the public and the private sectors, which violate human rights or which do not comply with obligations under the international human rights instruments to which Thailand is a party, and to promote education and the dissemination of knowledge on human rights.

14. In order to strengthen the Commission's work, the 2007 Constitution has given the Commission additional mandates for the protection of human rights: the power to submit cases to the Constitutional Court and the Administrative Court when it is

found that the provisions of any law, rule, order or administrative act are detrimental to human rights, and the power to bring cases to the Court of Justice on behalf of victims of human rights violations.

15. To ensure that the Commission's reports and its recommendations regarding cases of human rights violations will be pursued seriously, in February 2009, the Prime Minister appointed a Committee, chaired by the Minister Attached to the Prime Minister's Office to follow up on reported cases and to ensure that assistance is being provided to the victims. The Committee also has the function of following up on implementation by the relevant agencies of the Commission's recommendations.

16. The National Committee on Human Rights Policy and Plan of Action is being set up to monitor and follow up on the National Human Rights Plan to ensure that each agency concerned has pursued actions to promote and protect human rights in accordance with the Plan.

17. Parliamentary mechanisms on human rights include the Parliamentary Committee on Justice and Human Rights, which conducts investigations, examinations and hearings on issues related to human rights violations and the protection of community rights in the justice system; and the Parliamentary Committee on Vulnerable Groups, which conducts investigations and studies to enhance the rights and welfare of children, youth, women, older persons and persons with disabilities.

18. The Rights and Liberties Protection Department under the Ministry of Justice serves to protect the rights and liberties of the people, promote awareness of individual rights and redress human rights violations by providing protection, assistance and remedies to witnesses, victims and defendants in criminal cases. The Department also provides legal counselling, advises people on how to claim their rights, receives complaints and coordinates assistance to victims of human rights violations.

19. The Office of International Peoples' Rights Protection was established in 2006 under the Office of the Attorney General. It acts as a legal aid clinic by providing legal services, including legal advice, dissemination of legal knowledge, protection of civil rights and settlement of disputes both to Thai nationals and to foreigners.

20. The Administrative Court, established under the 1997 Constitution, is legally empowered to adjudicate cases of disputes between Government agencies and private individuals or among State officials themselves. This judicial mechanism helps to prevent and protect the rights of people from being abused through the exercise of administrative power.

21. The Constitutional Court, established under the 1997 Constitution, was given an additional mandate under the 2007 Constitution to make decisions, based on petitions submitted by the National Human Rights Commission or individual victims of human rights violations, as to whether any existing law contains articles that have adverse impacts on human rights and are contrary to or inconsistent with the Constitution.

22. The Office of the Ombudsman was set up under the 1997 Constitution to protect public interests from being abused by State agencies that fail to perform in compliance with the law or whose activities exceed the scope of their powers and

duties as provided by law. The Ombudsman investigates and makes inquiries into complaints through fact-finding and the results of investigations are published in the Government Gazette and disclosed to the public. In some specific cases, the Ombudsman can also submit cases to the Constitutional Court or the Administrative Court.

5. Thailand: a State party to most of the core international human rights instruments

23. Thailand is now party to seven core international human rights instruments, namely:

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol

Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

6. National plans: mainstreaming and integration of human rights

24. As human rights are indeed universal, interrelated and interdependent, Thailand attaches equal importance to all rights, be they civil and political rights, economic rights or social and cultural rights. This includes the Government's priority to enhance the right to development, through which people can be empowered and equipped to meet their basic needs to live a decent life. Bearing in mind that human rights are cross-cutting issues that serve as the basis for social progress and people's well-being, the Royal Thai Government has mainstreamed human rights into various national plans that place human beings at the centre of development, for example:

(a) The tenth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2007-2011). The Plan has provided guiding policy for sustainable development by taking into account human development, human dignity and community rights;

(b) The National Security Policy (2007-2011). The Policy places great importance on the rule of law, non-discrimination, human rights and peaceful methods of achieving national security. It also promotes solidarity and understanding between people of different religions and backgrounds;

(c) The Second National Plan of Action on Human Rights (2009-2013). The Plan of Action, which was formulated through nationwide consultations among all stakeholders including civil society, aims to enhance human dignity and strengthen human rights networks through increased human rights awareness at all levels.

7. Legal and policy frameworks: special attention to vulnerable groups

25. Thailand is strongly committed to the fulfilment of its obligations under the international human rights instruments to which it is a party, through the establishment of various legal and policy frameworks with a particular focus on the rights of vulnerable groups, as described below.

Children

26. With regard to children:

(a) The Criminal Code Amendment Act (No. 16), 2003, stipulates that children under 18 shall not be sentenced to death or life imprisonment;

(b) The Criminal Code Amendment Act (No. 21), 2008, increases the age of children who shall not be punished for an offence from not yet over 7 years to 10 years of age; children above 10 years but not yet over 15 years of age shall not be punished for an offence but shall be reprimanded by the court; and for children above 15 but not yet over 18 years of age having committed an offence, if the court passes judgement inflicting punishment, the scale of punishment shall be reduced by one half;

(c) The Child Protection Act, 2003, aims to provide protection for children from all forms of abuse, exploitation, violence and gross negligence by clearly stipulating that any child below the age of 18 shall be protected by the State;

(d) The Promotion of Child and Youth Development Act, 2007, contributes directly to the promotion of programmes and activities for children and youth at all levels;

(e) The Labour Protection Act, 1998, increases the statutory minimum age for employment from 13 to 15 years of age to ensure that children remain in school longer and to prevent their early entry into the labour market. Employment of a child below the age of 15 is considered illegal. The Act also prohibits employment of a person below the age of 16 in the sea fishing industry and protects the rights of the child in accordance with the six ILO conventions and instruments concerning child labour to which Thailand is a party.

27. The Royal Thai Government is also fully committed to ensuring children's rights and welfare in a manner consistent with the collective vision of "A world fit for children". The National Agenda for Children and Youth was announced in 2007 to implement this noble vision. Various measures to promote and protect children throughout the country and to ensure their development have already been put in place so that they can grow up in a safe and promising environment and become productive members of society.

Women

28. With regard to women:

(a) The Civil Code Amendment Act (No. 16), 2007, provides women with equal rights to file claims for divorce and compensation;

(b) The Name Act B.E. 2548 (2005 Amendment) allows married women to choose whether to take the surname of their husband or to retain their original surname;

(c) The Female Title Act, 2008, allows married or divorced women to choose titles as Miss or Mrs.;

(d) The Domestic Violence Act, 2007, establishes the definition of domestic violence and provides compensation and rehabilitation for victims and contains provisions to protect victims from domestic violence;

(e) The Criminal Code Amendment Act (No. 19), 2007, expands the definition of rape to cover people of all sexes and all types of sexual penetration, criminalizes marital rape and imposes more severe penalties on offenders who engage in all forms of rape and sexual abuses;

(f) The Criminal Procedure Code Amendment Act, 2007, suspends an imprisonment sentence imposed on an offender who is pregnant or raising a child under the age of 3 and confines pregnant offenders or offenders with children under the age of 3 in a suitable place other than prisons during a period of suspension;

(g) The Labour Protection Act, 2008, guarantees equal standards of working conditions, benefits, welfare, wages and job promotion for female employees. It also stipulates the prohibition of sexual exploitation in the workplace.

29. In addition, the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security has proposed a draft Gender Equality Bill to eliminate any discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. Currently the Bill is under consideration by the Council of State.

30. Gender equality and empowerment of women are also the focus of the National Plan on Women's Development (2007-2011), which aims to promote opportunities for women to fully participate in the development process at all levels. The Plan also strives to promote and protect the rights and welfare of women in line with the obligations assumed under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals.

31. One notable activity to counter violence and discrimination against women is the Enhancing Lives of Female Inmates initiative under the guidance of Her Royal Highness Princess Bajrakitiyabha Mahidol. The initiative aims to bring the treatment of women prisoners up to international standards by proposing the draft United Nations rules for the treatment of women prisoners and non-custodial measures for women offenders. This initiative envisages the formulation and revision of prison and correctional management policies worldwide for the treatment of women prisoners to ensure that gender sensitivity and the specific needs of women in prisons are fully respected. It is hoped that, with the adoption of the draft United Nations rules, women prisoners not only in Thailand but also in correctional facilities around the world could benefit from this initiative.

Persons with disabilities

32. With regard to persons with disabilities:

(a) The Persons with Disabilities Empowerment Act, 2007, is a comprehensive rights-based law for persons with disabilities and contains strong anti-discrimination provisions;

(b) The Persons with Disabilities Education Act, 2008, is intended for persons with disabilities to be able to access education services and other resources at all levels and to improve the Thai educational system to enhance their quality of life and independent living through empowerment;

(c) The Third National Plan on Quality of Life Development of Persons with Disabilities 2007-2011 comprises an integrated approach and guidelines on disability and development practice for all authorities concerned;

(d) The Mental Health Act, 2008, aims to protect the rights of persons with mental health conditions, for example by providing them access to health care and enabling them to participate in society with their full capacity.

33. The draft Ministerial Regulations, Measures and Conditions on Promotion of Information Service, Communication Service, Telecommunication and ICT Accessibility, all forms of related Assistive Devices and Public or Private Funded Media Service for Persons with Disabilities, is being proposed by the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology for the consideration of the Cabinet. The draft Ministerial Regulations are aimed at providing access to information and ICT services as stipulated in the Persons with Disabilities Empowerment Act.

34. Thailand was actively involved in the drafting of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at the outset of that process. It was among the first countries that signed the Convention on the date that it was opened for signature. Certain laws and policies related to the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities have been put in place while various pieces of legislation in the country are still under review. Those that still contain elements of discrimination against persons with disabilities will be pushed forward for amendments. A subcommittee on the promotion and support of the Convention has also been set up to formulate and evaluate policies and programmes to carry out the objectives of the Convention, while social awareness of the Convention has been enhanced to promote and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons with disabilities.

The elderly

35. The Older Persons Act, 2003, stipulates that the elderly shall be entitled to protection, promotion and support in various areas, including social welfare, medical services, education, occupation or occupational training, social activity, facilitation, assistance and subsistence allowances. The Elderly Fund has been established under the Act to support its implementation. Fund resources have been allocated to various projects, such as community activities for the elderly, the work of civil society regarding older persons, financial support for housing for the elderly and assistance for elderly victims of any forms of human rights violations.

36. The Second National Plan for Older Persons (2002-2012) provides guidelines for agencies looking to develop and implement support activities for older persons. The Plan consists of five broad strategies: preparation for quality of life in old age; promotion of older persons' well-being; social protection for older persons; national management and personnel development for geriatric workers; and research on the elderly and monitoring and evaluation of implementation of the Plan.

37. The National Commission on the Elderly, chaired by the Prime Minister, has been established to follow up on the implementation of the National Plan and to

oversee policies and measures regarding older persons. In 2009, the Government successfully initiated and implemented a universal monthly subsistence allowance scheme, from which 3.5 million elderly who have no pension can benefit to sustain their well-being.

Migrants

38. With regard to migrants:

(a) The Labour Protection Act, 2008, guarantees registered migrants the same rights as Thai workers, which include a minimum wage equal to that of Thai workers, holidays, sick leave from work, overtime wages, clean accommodation, basic health insurance and basic education for their children;

(b) The Employment of Aliens Act, 2008, ensures that all migrant workers whose status has been regularized through country-wide registration processes administered by the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Labour will receive the same welfare and labour protection entitlements as those of Thai workers in accordance with the Labour Protection Act and the Social Security Act. The Act also imposes heavier penalties on employers who engage in human trafficking and forced labour;

(c) The Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act, 2008, includes the following key elements: (1) heavier penalties on all persons involved in human trafficking; (2) compensation, which victims may claim from the offender for any damages caused by human trafficking; (3) shelter and other necessities including physical, psychosocial, legal, educational and health care provided to victims; and (4) protection for both men and women and boys and girls regardless of their nationalities.

39. The Royal Thai Government has stepped up cooperation on labour and anti-human trafficking issues through bilateral and multilateral agreements with countries in the Mekong subregion. Memorandums of understanding with neighbouring countries have been concluded to manage the flow of illegal migrants. Efforts have been intensified to curb human trafficking through the implementation of relevant laws. Awareness of migrant workers' rights under these laws has been raised among law enforcement officers and employers.

40. The National Operation Centre on Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking was set up under the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security to ensure the efficiency of law enforcement. Furthermore, the Operational Guideline on the Prevention, Suppression, Assistance and Protection of Trafficked Persons for Labour Purposes has been developed to enhance the capacity of line officials in dealing with labour exploitation of trafficked persons. Compensation for victims of exploitation has already been secured in some cases.

Ethnic groups

41. With regard to ethnic groups:

(a) The Civil Registration Act, 2008, provides all children born in Thailand with the right to birth registration, including children of displaced persons. This would further result in their entitlement to basic health services and education, and

their obtaining permission for temporary residence in the country without illegal status;

(b) The Nationality Act, 2008, stipulates that in granting Thai nationality to a person, consideration must be given both to the interests of national security and to human rights, which marks the first time that the human rights dimension has been taken into account in this respect. Under the Act, more ethnic persons born in Thailand could acquire citizenship. Outreach efforts have been undertaken to promote awareness regarding the right to birth registration and the right to citizenship of the highland minorities. Since the law has taken effect, thousands of individuals have gone through the process;

(c) The Cabinet Resolution on Education for Unregistered Persons of 5 July 2005 provides for the right to education at all levels for all children without legal status in Thailand. Accordingly, such children can enrol at public schools certified by the Ministry of Education. Outreach campaigns to raise awareness about the right of unregistered children to education are going on among officials concerned in targeted areas. The Ministry of Education, under a United Nations Children's Fund Thailand-supported project, is also operating schools in several remote hill tribe areas, based on the notion that if the children are unable to reach the schools, the schools must reach them;

(d) The 2007 Constitution guarantees the right of traditional local communities, such as those in the highlands, to enjoy their own culture and traditions and to preserve their natural resources and local environment. They are also provided with assistance in agriculture and vocational training, education, health-care services, basic infrastructure and alternative employment opportunities through the development projects sponsored by the royal family.

8. Justice: a key to achieving human rights for all

42. Thailand is undergoing an ambitious process of improving the administration of justice, including the judicial process, with a view to ensuring that it is more efficient, transparent and fair to all groups. This will be achieved by: bringing laws up-to-date so that they reflect the current socioeconomic situation and protect individuals' rights; developing working systems and processes that could extensively and equitably deliver justice and the protection of rights and liberty to the people; promoting greater participation of the public in the judicial process; increasing people's access to information concerning the judicial process, with a view to creating transparency and accountability in the use of State power; and eliminating impunity.

43. The Master Plan for the Administration of Justice (2009-2012) and the Strategic Plan for Development of Justice Process in the Southern Border Provinces of Thailand (2010-2014) have already been approved by the Cabinet. These developments will ensure the rule of law, justice, non-discrimination and national reconciliation and also eliminate impunity in the justice system. Any cases of human rights violations will be fully investigated without exception, in accordance with the law. Moreover, the Law Reform Commission has been set up, as required by the 2007 Constitution. The Commission, which is under the Office of the Council of State, acts as an interdisciplinary body to review laws and recommend legal reforms and amendments by taking into account the opinions of all people affected by such laws.

9. Interfaith dialogue: a key to ensuring equal dignity of human beings

44. The right of people to profess a religion, to observe religious precepts and to exercise a form of worship in accordance with their individual beliefs is guaranteed and protected by the Constitution. Based on such freedom and liberty, interfaith dialogue has become an important element of State policy, which has been promoted on several fronts. In Thailand, religious leaders of different faiths meet monthly to discuss issues of common interest and to enhance cooperation and mutual understanding among people of different faiths. The Government promotes such activities with a view to strengthening a harmonious society and deepening understanding, trust and tolerance among people with diverse cultural and religious backgrounds.

45. The southern border provinces of Thailand are home to 1.5 million Muslims, or approximately 20 per cent of the total Muslim population in Thailand. Interfaith dialogue with the Muslim population has been adopted as an important State policy to promote peace and harmony in the southern areas in various fields. Muslim youth from the south are encouraged to visit communities in other parts of the country to learn about the exercise of democratic governance and how people of various faiths, cultures and religions can live in peaceful coexistence. Various seminars and meetings between Muslim religious leaders in the south and State authorities have been held to exchange views and opinions on the basis of mutual understanding and trust.

46. The peace and reconciliation approach based on His Majesty the King's advice to "understand, reach out, develop" has been adopted as a guideline for development in the southern border provinces. The Royal Thai Government has also worked with stakeholders, including legitimate representatives of the people, to ensure transparency, accountability and justice and to foster betterment of the region.

10. Freedom of speech and expression: a tool for checks and balances

47. Significant legislative instruments to promote and protect freedom of speech and expression in Thailand include:

(a) The 2007 Constitution, which guarantees the freedom to express opinions, make speeches, write, print and publicize, and the freedom of assembly and association. It also prohibits the closure or censorship of, or interference with, newspapers or other mass media and bans politicians from owning media outlets;

(b) The Printing Act, 2007, which repealed the Printing Act, 1941, which authorized State officials to control the print media and prohibit its distribution. It also lifted all censorship provisions contained in the previous Act;

(c) The Official Information Act, 1997, which provides people with the right to access official information and enables them to scrutinize the work of Government. The Act constitutes an important channel for increasing people's participation in public affairs and is also a strong tool that can be used to counter corruption and hold the Government accountable.

48. Thailand is an open society with a vibrant community of both local and international media, human rights defenders, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in all areas, which actively work to promote human rights not only in Thailand but also in the region. The fact that many regional and international NGOs

and international organizations have chosen Thailand as a regional centre for their activities reflects their recognition of the country's geographical strategic importance in the region and the human rights environment it can offer, which is conducive to their work. It is also a testament to the vibrant and strong democracy of Thailand.

49. Regarding the question of lèse-majesté, this is part of Thailand's Criminal Code and accords protection to the monarchy in much the same way that provisions against libel protect ordinary people. The difference is that because the monarchy is a neutral and highly respected institution, it does not enter into legal proceedings on its own behalf. Indeed, the Constitution does not allow the monarchy to comment or act in its own defence. In all instances, cases would be filed with the police and those charged would be treated in accordance with due process of law. Moreover, the lèse-majesté law was approved by the Parliament, which reflects the democratic will of the Thai people. There have been instances when the lèse-majesté law might have been too liberally interpreted and abused by individuals, leading the Government to emphasize that the law must be enforced with caution. A review process is also under way to study aspects that should be improved and to determine the best way to fairly enforce the lèse-majesté law.

11. Right to development: basic element for the full enjoyment of human rights

50. Thailand attaches importance to the right to development and human security with a view to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Thailand is on track to meet all of its Millennium Development Goal commitments by or before 2015. The greatest development has been in the areas of hunger and poverty eradication, gender equality and maternal health. National poverty incidence has been reduced steadily as a result of employment promotion and income generation projects.

51. Thailand strives to enhance living standards through development, not only on a national level but also on an international level. By engaging in South-South development cooperation and taking a leading role in subregional and regional cooperation initiatives, Thailand is also contributing towards the achievement of Millennium Development Goal 8, to develop a global partnership for development. During the world food crisis in 2008, Thailand was among the few countries that committed to not intervene in rice export markets so as to help to alleviate the international rice shortage and ensure global food security. This reflects Thailand's concrete contribution to the realization of the right to food.

52. Thailand has continued to strengthen its health system through the enactment of the National Health Security Act, 2002, which guarantees all Thai people the right to access quality health-care services, including HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention under the universal health-care coverage scheme. The maternal mortality rate has declined rapidly in the past decade owing to greater access to health care and related information in remote areas.

53. As Thailand is committed to an additional set of more ambitious targets, called MDG-Plus, the Government's policy of 15 years of free education for all children was successfully implemented in 2009, from the kindergarten level through high schools and vocational colleges, both public and private. This includes budget allocations for school uniforms, textbooks, tuition, school supplies, learning materials and extra-curricular activities. This initiative also promotes equal and fair educational opportunities for disadvantaged people.

54. Thailand has been a strong advocate of the human security perspective in national and international frameworks. Nationally, Thailand established the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security in 2002 to promote social justice and equality, and improve security and the quality of life of the people. Thailand's human security strategies focus mainly on empowering people and communities at the grass-roots level for sustainable development. Internationally, Thailand is a member of both the Human Security Network and the Friends of Human Security, which seek to ensure a balance between freedom from fear and freedom from want.

12. Humanitarianism: Thailand's long-time contribution to the world community

55. Thailand has upheld a humanitarian tradition of hosting millions of refugees and displaced persons from neighbouring countries for over 50 years. The country continues to host more than 130,000 displaced persons in nine temporary shelter areas along its western border and has been working closely with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and many other humanitarian organizations in providing protection, offering services and finding durable solutions for these displaced persons. Thailand has adhered strictly to international legal norms and humanitarian and human rights principles in applying measures and its immigration laws with respect to those who illegally enter the Kingdom. Due regard is given to their human dignity and to striking a balance between protecting individual rights and maintaining national security.

56. Thailand has provided humanitarian support to international relief and reconstruction efforts after natural catastrophes and crisis situations. Thailand was the first country to respond to the needs of victims of Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar, and was among those countries making financial contributions for emergency needs in the aftermath of the crises in the Gaza Strip. Thailand has sent troops and civilian personnel to join United Nations peacebuilding and humanitarian operations in many different regions, including in Timor-Leste, Aceh, Nepal, Iraq, Iran, the Sudan and Darfur. Thailand's male and female personnel involved in such operations have proactively supported the activities of the United Nations to restore peace and provide development and technical assistance, with a view to promoting sustainable peace and stability in those countries.

13. Regional and international contributions: Thailand's active role in advancing human rights worldwide

Human rights frameworks in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations

57. As chair of ASEAN for 2008-2009, Thailand is committed to the establishment of an ASEAN human rights body. This commitment has led to the formation of the Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights as the first regional human rights mechanism ever established in Asia. The key purposes of the Intergovernmental Commission are to promote and protect human rights consistent with international standards, uphold the right of the people of ASEAN to live in peace and adhere to the principles of democracy. With its terms of reference adopted by the Foreign Ministers of ASEAN in July 2009 and a first meeting held in October 2009 in Thailand, the Intergovernmental Commission will be able to chart the way forward for ASEAN to begin a new chapter that would advance the cause of human rights in the region and pave the way for a genuine rule-based and people-centred ASEAN community.

58. Thailand is also committed to working with ASEAN countries towards the establishment of the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children and the development of ASEAN mechanisms for the implementation of instruments in the areas of trafficking in persons and migrant workers.

Thailand's cooperation with international human rights mechanisms and forums

59. Thailand has been playing an active part in international human rights forums. Thai mandate holders have served in several human rights treaty bodies and special procedures, including the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. These mandate holders have undoubtedly made valuable contributions to the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide. Thailand has extended good cooperation to international human rights mechanisms. United Nations mandate holders have been able to engage with the competent Thai authorities and a wide range of stakeholders when visiting Thailand.

60. Thailand has played a generous host to some 32 United Nations offices and cooperates closely with the Regional Office for South-East Asia of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). The country has always fully supported the activities of OHCHR to protect and promote human rights in Thailand and in the South-East Asian region.

61. Representatives of civil society and international human rights organizations, such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the International Federation for Human Rights, are regular visitors to Thailand, while many have chosen Thailand to be their regional headquarters. Thailand also hosts the regional delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and enjoys good cooperation with ICRC on international humanitarian law and humanitarian issues.

62. In recent years, Thailand has hosted numerous international and regional meetings on human rights and human security, such as the annual Workshop on Regional Cooperation for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Asia-Pacific Region in 2001; the intersessional workshop on the development of national plans of action for the promotion and protection of human rights in the Asia-Pacific region in 2004; the Human Security Network Ministerial Meeting in 2004; the Helsinki Process Workshop on Anti-Human Trafficking in 2007; the Regional Workshop on Criminal Justice Responses to Trafficking in Persons: "Ending Impunity for Traffickers and Securing Justice for Victims" in 2007; the Asia-Pacific Meeting on Armed Violence and Development in 2008; the meeting of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts to review and update the Model Strategies and Practical Measures on the Elimination of Violence against Women in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in 2008; the Asia-Pacific Community-Based Rehabilitation Congress for persons with disabilities in 2009; and the Asia Regional Consultation on the Activities of Private Military and Security Companies: Regulation and Monitoring in 2009.

Human Rights Council

63. Although Thailand is not yet a member of the Human Rights Council, the country has supported the work of the Council since its inception. Thailand's statements and interventions from the first through the twelfth session of the Council reflect its commitment to the work of the Council and its full cooperation in the strengthening of the Council's institution-building process. Thailand has played an active role in the interactive dialogues held with the High Commissioner for Human Rights and mandate holders. Thailand is strongly determined to be able to make greater contributions to the work of the Council in fulfilling its mandate and functions as stipulated in resolution 60/251 of the General Assembly on its establishment.

64. Thailand is committed to continuing to work closely and constructively with other countries, both members and non-members, to make the Human Rights Council an effective human rights institution based on the principles of impartiality, transparency, constructive international dialogue and cooperation. Thailand also supports the functioning of the universal periodic review, under which all countries are subject to a review without exception. It is Thailand's hope that the mechanism not only plays a stocktaking role in the human rights policy of the country under review, but also to facilitate improvements in and implementation of human rights policies and legal mechanisms in areas that fall short of international human rights standards. Thailand will be under review in 2011 and is ready to engage in the examination process in an open and constructive spirit.

C. Why Thailand?

65. Thailand is seeking an opportunity to be a first-time member of the Human Rights Council, based on the principle of real inclusiveness of the Council and its consistent contributions to the cause of human rights at all levels. Nationally, Thailand recognizes its problems and is strongly determined to fix them. Regionally, Thailand has played an active role in promoting and protecting human rights, which has led to the establishment of the first regional human rights body in Asia. Internationally, Thailand has been a constructive force in promoting moderation and fostering a spirit of cooperation. The country is working with all sides in partnership and on the basis of the interest of all citizens around the world in receiving protection from all forms of human rights violations. Thailand strongly believes that through its contributions, efforts and determination, as reflected in its concrete commitments and pledges towards the advancement of human rights, the country can be a meaningful member of, and an effective partner in, the Human Rights Council.

United Nations A/64/688

General Assembly

Distr.: General
2 March 2010
English
Original: Spanish

Sixty-fourth session
Agenda item 19
Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba

Letter dated 25 February 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to enclose the Declaration on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba which was adopted at the Summit on Latin American and Caribbean Unity held in Riviera Maya, Mexico, from 21 to 23 February 2010 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would arrange for this Declaration to be circulated as a document of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 19.

(*Signed*) Pedro **Núñez Mosquera**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations

10-25571 (E) 030310 040310

Please recycle

Annex to the letter dated 25 February 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Declaration on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba

February 2010

The Heads of State and Government of the Latin American and Caribbean countries gathered together at the Unity Summit express our strongest condemnation of the coercive and unilateral economic measures imposed for political reasons against sovereign countries, measures which impair the well-being of our peoples and are designed to curb their exercise of the right to determine of their own free will their political, economic and social systems.

We accordingly reiterate the strongest condemnation of such laws and measures that contravene international law as the Helms-Burton Act, and we urge the Government of the United States of America to end them.

As a corollary, we call on the Government of the United States of America to comply with the successive resolutions adopted by the United Nations General Assembly by ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed against Cuba. That embargo is contrary to international law, inflicts extensive and unwarranted harm on the Cuban people and affects peace and harmonious relations among the nations of the Americas.

United Nations A/64/689–S/2010/114

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
3 March 2010

Original: English

General Assembly
Sixty-fourth session
Agenda item 21
Question of Cyprus

Security Council
Sixty-fifth year

Letter dated 26 February 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter dated 24 February 2010, addressed to you by Kemal Gökeri, Representative of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (see annex).

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 21, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Ertuğrul **Apakan**
Permanent Representative

10-25740 (E) 030310

Please recycle

Annex to the letter dated 26 February 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to refer to the letter dated 17 February 2010, addressed to you by the Greek Cypriot representative and circulated as a document of the General Assembly and of the Security Council (A/64/671-S/2010/92), which yet again contains well-known allegations of violations of "international air traffic regulations and the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus", and to bring to your kind attention the following:

In response to such false and pretentious allegations, I wish, once again, to reiterate that flights within the sovereign airspace of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus take place with the full knowledge and consent of the appropriate authorities of the State, over which the Greek Cypriot administration in South Cyprus has no jurisdiction or right of say whatsoever. Furthermore, it should be emphasized that allegations of so-called violations of air traffic regulations are invalid, as the civil aviation authority of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is the only competent authority to provide air traffic and aeronautical information services.

As stated in our previous letters, such allegations are based on the false and illegitimate claim that the sovereignty of the Greek Cypriot administration extends over the whole island, including the territory of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. This claim by the Greek Cypriot side is divorced from the existing realities in Cyprus, namely, the existence of two independent States, each exercising sovereignty and jurisdiction within its respective territory on the island.

Attempts by the Greek Cypriot representatives, through often-repeated false claims, to confer the legitimacy upon all illegal administration will be futile for as long as the Turkish Cypriot people refuse to give in to their demands. What would indeed be conducive to a better climate on the island would be for the Greek Cypriot side to stop arrogating for itself the rights and responsibilities it does not legally have, and to cease all hostilities towards the Turkish Cypriot people.

Last, the Greek Cypriot administration should be reminded, once again, that its counterpart is, and has always been, the Turkish Cypriot side, not Turkey. I also deem it imperative to point out that Turkey, as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, does not need the advice of the Greek Cypriot administration on how the issues should be dealt with within the context of international law and the Security Council. Furthermore, throughout the negotiations, Turkey has been encouraging the Turkish Cypriot side for the achievement of a just and political settlement on the island. I would like to put on record once again that the Turkish Cypriot side is committed to finding a settlement in the form of a new partnership that will be in line with the established United Nations parameters and body of work. Bizonality, political equality of the two peoples, the equal status of the two constituent States and the continuation of Turkey's effective guarantee will constitute the parameters for a solution to the Cyprus problem. Removal of the existing isolations on Turkish Cypriots and equal treatment of the two sides by the international community will surely contribute positively to the efforts towards reaching a comprehensive settlement in Cyprus. Similar commitment from the

Greek Cypriot side will pave the way for an early, mutually acceptable and fair settlement in Cyprus.

I should be grateful if the present letter could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 21, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Kemal **Gökeri**
Representative
Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

United Nations A/64/690

General Assembly

Distr.: General
2 March 2010

Original: English

Sixty-fourth session
Agenda item 62
Advancement of women

Letter dated 1 March 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to convey to you information on the consistent implementation of international mechanisms on women's rights in the Republic of Uzbekistan (see annex).

I would appreciate if you could circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 62.

(*Signed*) Murad **Askarov**
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Uzbekistan

10-25607 (E) 040310 040310

Please recycle

Annex to the letter dated 1 March 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Russian]

Consistent Implementation of International Mechanisms on Women's Rights in the Republic of Uzbekistan

In 2010, the General Assembly is observing the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, designed to improve the status of women and ensure their rights as the cornerstone of sustainable social development and peace in the twenty-first century.

Uzbekistan is meeting its international human rights treaty obligations with consistency and resolve. To that end, active and constructive dialogue is ongoing with the United Nations treaty bodies and with the Charter organs and specialized agencies of the United Nations. Timely submission of national reports and implementation of treaty committee recommendations are deemed highly important.

Over the past two years, Parliament has ratified the following seven international human rights treaties: the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty; the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime; the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography; the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict; the United Nations Convention against Corruption; the Minimum Age Convention of the International Labour Organization (ILO); and the ILO Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour.

National plans of action have been elaborated and are being implemented based on treaty body recommendations to implement the recommendations of the Committee against Torture, the Human Rights Committee, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Committee on the Rights of the Child; the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

On 11 December 2008, the national report of Uzbekistan was reviewed as part of the universal periodic review. The report of Uzbekistan was approved at the tenth session of the Human Rights Council.

In keeping with established procedure, a national plan of action to give effect to the recommendations of the Human Rights Council on the outcome of the universal periodic review of Uzbekistan was adopted in 2009 and is being implemented. One section of the plan is dedicated to ensuring and protecting the rights of women. Over 50 State bodies and non-governmental organizations are involved in that work.

The Interdepartmental Working Group to study the situation with respect to the observance of human rights by law enforcement agencies, headed by the Ministry of Justice, is responsible for monitoring implementation of the national plans of action.

The Government has also adopted a national plan of action to implement ILO Conventions Nos. 138 and 182, on the minimum age for employment and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, which provide for measures to enhance legislation and to monitor fulfilment of international obligations.

Uzbekistan also attaches great importance to implementation of General Comments 3 and 6 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Concluding Observations of CEDAW.

To this end, broad awareness-raising and educational activity on human rights is being carried out. Over 120 of the most important international human rights law instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, have been translated into Uzbek and published in large print runs, in close cooperation with such international partners as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), ILO, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Learning materials and compilations have been published in the Uzbek, Russian and Karakalpak languages, with support from international organizations.

More than 20 legal periodicals and human rights journals are published in Uzbekistan. The mass media give priority coverage to issues related to the protection of human rights, liberties and legal interests. A competition is held for Uzbek journalists on the topic of how gender equality is reflected in the mass media. Women's newspapers and magazines, including such titles as *Oila*, *Saodat*, *Lady*, *Bekazhon*, *Bella Terra*, *Sanam*, *Duganazhon*, *Kizbibi*, *Sugdiana* and others are extremely popular.

The general recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women have been translated into Uzbek.

Measures are under way to continue improving women's rights education. The curricula of preschools, primary and secondary schools, specialized high schools, professional training institutions and institutions of higher education as well as continuing education institutions for educators, medical specialists, social workers, journalists, lawyers, law enforcement officials and judges all include study of women's rights issues and of the provisions of the Convention and national law.

Women's non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are very actively involved in informing the public about gender issues, investigating and monitoring women's rights issues and providing expert assessments of national law from a gender perspective.

A survey conducted by the Public Opinion Centre indicates that the number of requests to women's organizations which were favourably resolved in 2008 was five times greater than 2005. This confirms data on the effectiveness of their work. In 2005, according to women's replies, women's organizations provided valuable assistance in resolving the problems of 11.5 per cent of poll respondents, while in 2008, this indicator had risen to 62.2 per cent.

In accordance with the Concluding Observations of CEDAW, which have been widely disseminated, many awareness-raising and educational events have been held as part of the preparation of the fourth periodic report on women's rights, at the initiative and with the participation of NGOs, enabling them to make an increased contribution to and play a greater role in resolving problems related to awareness and implementation of women's rights in all areas of life.

Uzbekistan highly values and supports all United Nations initiatives aimed at ensuring gender equality, eliminating gender-based violence and discrimination and strengthening the role of women in all areas of life. If these goals are not achieved it will be impossible in today's world to ensure the dynamic development of States, the maintenance of their socio-economic and political stability and the elimination of poverty, disease, illiteracy, violence, crime, extremism, intolerance and other problems and threats.

A priority objective of State policy in Uzbekistan in the social sphere is the steady enhancement of the role of women in the family, society and the State, ensuring legal, economic and social protection for women, as well as the creation of all necessary conditions for their comprehensive development.

This policy is, of course, based on the traditions and values of the people of Uzbekistan, where women have always played a significant role in strengthening the institution of the family, raising and educating children and preserving a healthy emotional atmosphere and principles of responsibility and tolerance in society. Family is one of the most important Uzbek values. As President Karimov has said, "Developing the institution of the family along with other important social structures and raising its status are priorities of State policy, because the health of the family is the underpinning of society. Only in a healthy family can a healthy child be born. And a healthy generation is the country's future, the strength that will shape tomorrow."

State policy on the protection of women's rights in Uzbekistan is being applied in several key areas:

1. Systematic review and assessment of the status of women, the enjoyment of their rights and the improvement of their role in the family and society and in the management of social and public affairs.

2. Development and adoption of measures to address problems that women may encounter in various spheres of social life; support for women's education; assistance with job-seeking and employment; and development of various forms of entrepreneurship for women.

3. Enforcement of regulatory acts for the protection of women's rights and interests and the protection of mothers and children. The enactment and implementation of the Additional Allowances for Women Act, the Presidential Decree on additional measures for strengthening the social protection of women and a number of other regulatory acts aimed at eliminating discrimination against women have played a major role in the advancement of women in Uzbekistan.

One of the main steps that Uzbekistan took after gaining independence was to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1995). Women's rights are also guaranteed through its accession to other international instruments such as, inter alia, the ILO Convention concerning the

Reduction of Hours of Work to Forty a Week and Maternity Protection Convention, the Vienna Declaration (1993), and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995). In 2008, Uzbekistan ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and also adopted an Act to Combat Trafficking in Persons, which is making a significant contribution to eradicating that problem at the international level.

4. Implementation of State programmes adopted in connection with the Year for the Protection of People's Interests, the Year of the Family, the Year of the Healthy Generation, Mother and Child Year, Women's Year, Health Year, Youth Year and Rural Development and Services Year. Within the framework of these programmes, a series of specific measures have been taken to advance the status of women, enhance their role in the family and in State and social structures and improve the system for the protection of their legal, social and spiritual interests.

The year 2010 has been proclaimed in Uzbekistan as the Year of the Harmoniously Developed Generation, which will further strengthen the role of women in raising a generation of physically healthy and spiritually mature young people and helping boys and girls take up their proper place in society.

5. Development and implementation of measures aimed at encouraging women to become more politically and socially active and supporting the involvement of women's NGOs in the social and political life of the country as well as in the international women's movement.

6. Expanding women's active participation in political activities. Women are broadly represented in the power structures and throughout the system of economic and political leadership in Uzbekistan. Under the regulations, women are eligible for election as one of the deputy prime ministers of Uzbekistan, as the chair of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Karakalpakstan and as *khokims* (regional chief administrators) in the oblasts and the city of Tashkent.

In Uzbekistan, there is a 30 per cent quota for women candidates to the Oliy Majlis (Parliament). Women account for 15 per cent of the members of Senate (the upper house of Parliament), 18 per cent of the Legislative Chamber of Parliament and 15.2 per cent of local representative bodies. In the December 2009 parliamentary elections, 33 of the 150 deputies elected — or 22 per cent — were women. A woman has once again been elected speaker of the Legislative Chamber.

Over 20 per cent of employees in Uzbekistan's judicial system are women. A woman has held the position of Ombudsman in Uzbekistan since 1995. In 2007, for the first time in the country's history, a woman was nominated as a candidate for President. All of that is clear evidence of the advancement of women in Uzbekistan.

7. Women's active participation in business development and in the economic life of the country as a whole. As at the beginning of the current decade, the shares of women's and men's participation in the economy stood at 44 per cent and 56 per cent, respectively.

Employment for women and their participation in socio-economic activities are major factors in strengthening women's independence and giving them an active role in society and in life. To that end, the Government has developed local employment programmes for women, including annual job creation in each region; meeting women's employment needs through the development of small business, the

service sector and home-based work; upgrading and streamlining the structure of women's employment in rural areas; providing credit on preferential terms to small businesses that employ mainly female labour or are managed by women; and organizing training for women on how to run a business.

One of the main prerequisites for this broad involvement of women in social and economic activities is a literacy rate among women in Uzbekistan — over 99 per cent — that is high even by the standards of the world's most developed countries, as well as a non-discriminatory approach to women's education and professional training. Nearly 40 per cent of all professionals and research personnel in Uzbekistan are women, and women make up a significant percentage of senior management in the country's scientific and educational institutions.

In the words of Uzbekistan's leader, Islam Karimov, the protection of women's interests and the comprehensive advancement of women are among the principal tasks and priorities of the State of Uzbekistan. Giving effect to these priorities will help foster effective socio-economic reform in the country and bring about fundamental democratic change in all spheres of life. Uzbekistan has made significant progress in its socio-economic and political development, in education, health care and gender equality, and towards the achievement of the other Millennium Development Goals. All of this is directly related to the State's concern for the welfare of women. Uzbekistan will continue to support all United Nations initiatives in favour of women's interests by developing further cooperation both with the relevant United Nations entities and structures and with other countries and international organizations.

United Nations A/64/691

General Assembly

Distr.: General
2 March 2010

Original: English

Sixty-fourth session
Agenda item 114
Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Letter dated 24 February 2010 from the Permanent Representatives of Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Ecuador, Egypt, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Nicaragua, Nigeria, the Philippines, Qatar, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, the United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly

We have the honour to draw your kind attention to the establishment in the United Nations of the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking.

This Group of Friends is an informal, voluntary and open-ended association of Member States created to help reinvigorate and consolidate the global fight against trafficking in persons.

The Group of Friends seeks to enhance the role of the United Nations in fighting human trafficking and to promote better coordination and cohesiveness of anti-trafficking efforts, including through elaboration and implementation of a global plan of action against trafficking in persons.

On the eve of consultations in the General Assembly on a global plan of action against trafficking in persons, we have the honour to submit for your kind attention a non-paper worked out by the Group of Friends which contains some arguments in favour of the elaboration of a global plan of action and possible substantive elements of the future document (see annex).

We would appreciate if you could kindly circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 114.

We would also be glad to share with you personally our ideas regarding the plans and intentions of the Group of Friends. In this regard, we would be grateful if you could meet with the members of the Group at your earliest convenience.

10-25592 (E) 050310

Please recycle

(*Signed*) Tawfeeq Ahmed **Almansoor**
Permanent Representative of Bahrain

(*Signed*) Abulkalam Abdul **Momen**
Permanent Representative of Bangladesh

(*Signed*) Andrei **Dapkiunas**
Permanent Representative of Belarus

(*Signed*) Pablo **Solón-Romero**
Permanent Representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia

(*Signed*) Francisco **Carrión-Mena**
Permanent Representative of Ecuador

(*Signed*) Maged A. **Abdelaziz**
Permanent Representative of Egypt

(*Signed*) Hardeep Singh **Puri**
Permanent Representative of India

(*Signed*) Byrganym **Aitimova**
Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan

(*Signed*) Nurbek **Jeenbaev**
Permanent Representative of Kyrgyzstan

(*Signed*) María **Rubiales de Chamorro**
Permanent Representative of Nicaragua

(*Signed*) U. Joy **Ogwu**
Permanent Representative of Nigeria

(*Signed*) Hilario G. **Davide**, Jr.
Permanent Representative of the Philippines

(*Signed*) Nassir Abdulaziz **Al-Nasser**
Permanent Representative of Qatar

(*Signed*) Vitaly I. **Churkin**
Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation

(*Signed*) Sirodjidin M. **Aslov**
Permanent Representative of Tajikistan

(*Signed*) Aksoltan T. **Ataeva**
Permanent Representative of Turkmenistan

(*Signed*) Anwar Othman **Al-Barout**
Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the United Arab Emirates

(*Signed*) Murad **Askarov**
Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan

(*Signed*) Jorge **Valero Briceño**
Permanent Representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

Annex to the letter dated 24 February 2010 from the Permanent Representatives of Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Ecuador, Egypt, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Nicaragua, Nigeria, the Philippines, Qatar, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, the United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly

Why a global plan of action against human trafficking?

While the slave trade was abolished two centuries ago, slavery is not yet just history. One of its modern manifestations is trafficking in persons. With respect to preventing and suppressing this heinous crime, it is high time that the efforts of the world community were harnessed and synergized by channelling them into a coherent, balanced and comprehensive framework.

1. Arguments for a global plan

- There are many treaties and agreements on the subject of human trafficking: the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Trafficking Protocol); various International Labour Organization conventions; and a multiplicity of regional documents and initiatives. Each of them brings its own added value to the global fight against trafficking in persons.

- Yet, all these instruments are still not universally adhered to, are characterized by differences in the extent of their ratification and implementation, and target different aspects of human trafficking. The global normative anti-trafficking structure is dispersed. It seems only logical in this context to impart to the existing structure some degree of coherence and uniformity.

- A global plan of action would serve as a global mechanism that ensured the implementation of all anti-trafficking instruments in a unified and genuinely comprehensive manner.

- There are numerous players in the area of human trafficking that were not quite so visible on the global scene a decade ago: international organizations, civil society, the private sector. Very often, the efforts of these actors involved in the area of trafficking in persons are compartmentalized and uncoordinated and are not channelled towards common goals. The existing international anti-trafficking instruments aim to harmonize appropriate national acts of legislation; they do not, however, prescribe roles for the increasing number of non-State actors. This means that there is the lack of an all-engaging structure for global cooperation against human trafficking.

- This is why we also need a global framework that ensures effective cooperation and coordination among various stakeholders and the multiplicity of anti-human trafficking initiatives. Thus, there emerges a need for the fourth P, namely, partnership, which should join the three traditional Ps: prevention, prosecution and protection.

- There is a worldwide perception that the trafficking in persons is a hidden crime whose true extent is unknown because of existing gaps as regards reliable global data and monitoring mechanisms. The global plan of action will ensure better data collection and promote research on trafficking in persons.

- The global plan of action does not entail a duplication of the existing efforts in this area. And it would be wrong to reject this mechanism on the grounds that support already exists for the Trafficking in Persons Protocol. The plan and the Protocol do not conflict with each other: The goal of the Protocol is to bring in line national acts of legislation. The goal of the global plan of action is to assist in this process by, among other measures, taking on board important new players.

- The global plan of action will be a logical and meaningful culmination of the current critical build-up of awareness, good practices and action against trafficking in persons within and outside the United Nations.

- The global plan of action will promote the opportunity to establish links with the Millennium Development Goals which will be necessary in addressing the root causes of and the push-and-pull factors associated with trafficking in persons. Poverty, unemployment, gender inequality, discrimination and gender-based violence are some of the root causes that increase the vulnerability of the victims of trafficking and are matters that the Millennium Development Goals are concerned with as well.

2. Possible principles and goals of a global plan

Principles

- Balanced and coherent consideration of all aspects of, and the principles underlying, the combating of human trafficking: prevention, prosecution, protection and partnership

- Recognition of the shared goals and differentiated responsibilities of Member States

- Collaboration of Member States, international intergovernmental and parliamentary organizations, civil society, mass media and the private sector in the elimination of trafficking in persons

- Equal targeting of the "demand" and "supply" sides of human trafficking

- A balanced focus on all forms of exploitation of trafficked victims, including the sexual and labour-related forms, with due account taken of the gender- and age-related vulnerabilities of women and children

Goals

- Comprehensive conceptualization of the current international system of anti-trafficking instruments and mechanisms

- Reaffirmation of the commitments of Member States to taking decisive action to prosecute traffickers, protect their victims and prevent trafficking in persons

- Ensuring the systematic and long-term attention of the United Nations system and other international organizations, within their respective mandates, to the crime of human trafficking
- Strengthening of the organizational and logistic framework to ensure the most effective cooperation and coordination among various stakeholders and the multiplicity of anti-trafficking initiatives, efficient use of available instruments and resources, prevention of duplication of efforts, maximizing the resources and the contributions that various actors can provide to the fight against human trafficking, pooling data, and facilitating information and intelligence exchange
- Identification and elimination of gaps in the normative and institutional mechanisms of international anti-trafficking cooperation
- Institutionalization of multiagency cooperation with representative memberships and clearly delineated roles and responsibilities with respect to the prevention of trafficking in persons and the identification of the victims and their return and reintegration
- Ensuring a human rights-oriented and victim-centred approach to anti-trafficking activities

3. **Possible procedure for the elaboration and adoption of a global plan of action**

- Informal, open, inclusive and transparent consultations on a global plan of action
- Adoption of a global plan of action by the General Assembly in a resolution, at a plenary meeting of the Assembly

United Nations A/64/692

General Assembly

Distr.: General
4 March 2010

Original: English

Sixty-fourth session
Agenda item 53 (a)
Sustainable development: implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development

Water, peace and security: transboundary water cooperation

Note by the Secretariat*

Summary

The present note is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 64/198, in which the Assembly, inter alia, invited the President of the General Assembly to convene a high-level interactive dialogue of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly in New York on 22 March 2010, World Water Day, on the implementation of the International Decade for Action, "Water for Life", 2005-2015. The note provides background information for Member States for the high-level interactive dialogue panel on the theme "Water, peace and security: transboundary water cooperation".

* The present note is based largely on the UN-Water thematic paper for 2008 entitled "Transboundary waters: sharing benefits, sharing responsibilities", available from http://www.unwater.org/downloads/UNW_TRANSBOUNDARY.pdf. The note was prepared by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, jointly with the Economic Commission for Europe and the United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organization, as the two coordinators of the Task Force on Transboundary Waters, of UN-Water, the inter-agency mechanism designated by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, through its High-level Committee on Programmes, as the coordinating mechanism in the United Nations system in the area of water and sanitation.

10-26039 (E) 170310

Please recycle

Contents

		Page
I.	Introduction and background	3
II.	Challenges and benefits of cooperation	4
III.	Pillars for transboundary water cooperation	6
IV.	Contributions of the United Nations system to transboundary water cooperation	12
V.	Conclusions and recommendations	15

I. Introduction and background

1. For thousands of years, the amount of water on Earth has remained constant while the number and types of users of water have increased massively. Global dynamics — such as population growth, urbanization, land use changes, and global warming — are creating competing pressures on this finite resource. As a result, the amount of water available for each person is increasingly unequal and diminishing dramatically.

2. Geopolitical realities compound these trends. Rivers, lakes and aquifers do not respect national boundaries. Almost half of the Earth's land surface is drained by transboundary basins. Great reservoirs of freshwater also move silently below borders in underground aquifers.

3. Challenges related to transboundary waters[1] are expected to increase as a result of numerous pressures, such as climate change and population growth. Competition over water is even more acute in these zones of water stress, leading sometimes to serious tensions between different groups of users.

4. With every country seeking to satisfy its water needs from limited water resources, some foresee a future filled with conflict. Some have even raised the spectre of future "water wars", although conflicts over water within countries are more likely than between sovereign States.

5. It is important, however, to remember that water does not have to be a source of conflict and competition. If humanity is wise and just in the way it uses and shares its water resources, water can also be a catalyst for international cooperation and peace. History shows that cooperation, not conflict, is the most common response to transboundary water management issues.

6. Water should be seen as a multifaceted resource that provides opportunities for creating new benefits to be shared, for solving stakeholders' problems and for meeting their respective interests. When the management of shared water is handled with the right tools, namely, through cooperation, tolerance and mutual respect, it can pave a safe way towards sustainable and peaceful development from every angle: social, economic, political, cultural and ecological. Thus, the benefits that accrue from cooperation over water can and should go far beyond the management of the resource itself. Past experiences confirm that it is possible for parties with divergent interests to use a common resource harmoniously. What is important is learning how to manage shared resources equitably, in ways that guarantee good quality and adequate quantities of water for everyone. The present note indicates how transboundary cooperation should be designed to prevent conflict in the long term, despite the numerous pressure factors.

7. Over the last 60 years there have been more than 200 international water agreements. It is necessary to continue to nurture the opportunities for ensuring peace and security that transboundary water cooperation can provide. Nations share the responsibility for managing the world's transboundary waters for current and future generations.

[1] The term "transboundary water" in the present note refers to transboundary rivers, lakes, inland water as a whole and aquifers; here, it explicitly excludes open oceans, territorial seas and coastal waters.

8. The primary responsibility for transboundary water cooperation lies with Member States. However, the present note also shows how the United Nations system, through its coordination mechanism, UN-Water, has been collaborating to ensure coherence and complementarity in its policy and operational work in the service of Member States.

II. Challenges and benefits of cooperation

9. Approximately 40 per cent of the world's population lives in river and lake basins that comprise two or more countries, and perhaps even more significantly, over 90 per cent lives in countries that share basins. The existing 263 transboundary[2] lake and river basins cover nearly one half of the Earth's land surface and account for an estimated 60 per cent of global freshwater flow. A total of 145 States include territory within such basins, and 30 countries lie entirely within them. In addition, about 2 billion people worldwide depend on groundwater, which includes approximately 300 transboundary aquifer systems.

10. Aquifers not only contain quality water and represent a substantial hidden global capital, but also support land and water ecosystems. Their overexploitation can lead to serious problems such as groundwater depletion, saltwater intrusion in coastal areas and mobilization of toxic substances such as arsenic and fluoride. Pollution can also affect aquifers, and thus the populations relying on them.

11. The transboundary basins and aquifers link populations of different countries and support the incomes and livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people worldwide. Wetlands such as lakes and floodplains, which are also often shared by neighbouring countries, provide invaluable ecosystem services to humans, such as food provision and reduction of flood impacts and pollution. All transboundary water bodies create hydrological, social and economic interdependencies between societies. They are vital for economic development, reducing poverty and contributing to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. While embedding a potential for discourse and conflict, they provide opportunities for cooperation and promotion of regional peace and security as well as economic growth. Recognizing this potential through various initiatives, the members of UN-Water are focusing on tipping the balance from potential conflict to cooperation, by supporting countries in their efforts to improve the management of transboundary water resources.

12. Depleted and degraded freshwater supplies, caused by population growth, poorly managed development and weak governance, hamper sustainable development and underscore the need for cooperation between the major water-use sectors: agriculture, industry, energy, navigation and water supply and sanitation. Individual countries, within their areas of political responsibility, have good reasons to implement integrated water resources management to protect and sustainably use water and related ecosystems and to reconcile the demands of different sectors for socio-economic development. Potential transboundary impacts and conflicting interests can best be solved by cooperation, adequate legal and institutional frameworks, joint approaches to planning and sharing of benefits and related costs.

[2] The terms "transnational", "trans-State" and "international" are also used.

13. Differences between riparian countries, in terms of socio-economic development, capacity to manage water resources, infrastructure, political orientation and institutional as well as legal contexts, represent challenges to effective and coordinated development as well as to the joint management and protection of transboundary water resources. At the same time, these differences open up opportunities for capacity development and technical, social, legal and economic cooperation.

14. Not surprisingly, cooperation over transboundary surface waters has a long history. Cooperation about transboundary aquifers, however, is much more recent. Steps, however, are being taken: the General Assembly has adopted articles on the law of transboundary aquifers, and inventories of transboundary aquifers have been performed for Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa and Eastern Asia by different United Nations institutions pursuing water-related activities. These inventories will help to further our understanding of the sustainable management of such aquifers and their relationship with surface water.

Potential for cooperation and benefits for human security

15. A growing number of States are experiencing rising or even permanent water stress, and climate change consequences will increase the numbers of countries experiencing high variability in water resources availability, including higher frequencies or intensities of floods and droughts. Competition over water can heighten tensions and even lead to open conflict. An assessment of past water-related conflicts shows that water scarcity, dam construction, water abstraction, and chronic and accidental water pollution by industry, as well as neglect or non-acceptance of existing treaty provisions, often lie at the root of water tensions. As growing populations, urbanization and economic development all require more water for agricultural, municipal and industrial uses, there are greater risks. This said, it is usually factors outside the water domain that are decisive in exacerbating tensions.

16. In fact, history has often shown that the vital nature of freshwater is a powerful incentive for cooperation, compelling stakeholders to reconcile even the most divergent views. Water more often unites than divides peoples and societies. Since 1948, history shows only 37 incidents of acute conflict over water, while during the same period, over 295 international water agreements were negotiated and signed. Clearly, averting disputes is often a strong political driver for initiating cooperation on transboundary waters since riparian States recognize that they must safeguard their greater common interests.

17. Climate change is expected to add to pressures on transboundary water resources in many areas with fluctuations in water availability and water quality. It will magnify regional differences in the world's natural resources and assets and lead to such effects as an increased risk of inland flash floods, more frequent coastal flooding and droughts. The necessity to adapt to climate change, however, will also offer new opportunities for cooperation in developing adaptation strategies. But cooperation in the development of adaptation strategies is currently almost non-existent. The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) publication *Guidance on Water and Adaptation to Climate Change*, developed under the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes and its Protocol on Water and Health, describes how States can cooperate in the development of a basin-wide adaptation strategy.

18. Cooperation enables better ecological management, providing benefits to river, aquifer, lake, wetland and related ecosystems as well as adjacent estuaries, coastal areas and seas. It also underpins important further types of benefits, some of which are not readily apparent or properly taken advantage of. For example, efficient, cooperative management and development of shared waters and adjacent flood plains can yield increased food and energy production; improved irrigation can contribute to poverty reduction and help to control migration from rural areas to urban centres; and transboundary early warning systems can minimize loss of life in the event of floods. A third (political) benefit derives from the easing of tensions due to cooperation. Finally, as international waters can be catalytic agents, a fourth benefit is improved economic integration between States. Transboundary water management can thus directly or indirectly contribute to international trade, economic development, food security, political security, poverty alleviation and regional integration.

III. Pillars for transboundary water cooperation

19. Achieving transboundary cooperation is always a long and complex journey; there is no single path and there are few short cuts. Instead, there are many routes that can be followed, and any arrangement must be tailored to a given basin's characteristics and reflect a range of environmental, hydrological, political, economic, social and cultural circumstances. Water resources policy must also be coordinated with other natural resources and sectoral policies, such as land-use management and spatial planning.

20. Political will and commitment from all Governments, at all levels, are prerequisites for successful transboundary water management. While there is no universal solution, the seven pillars set out below are usually considered as necessary for long-term, sustainable and reliable transboundary cooperation.

Legal instruments

21. A sound legal framework is essential for stable and reliable cooperation. At the global level, the 1997 Convention on the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses represents an important step forward. The Convention was adopted by the General Assembly and provides a legal framework for inter-State cooperation on international watercourses. Although it is not yet in force, the Convention's core principles, namely, the equitable and reasonable utilization and the no-harm rule, are already part of international customary law. In Europe, the 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes has been the basis for adoption of many bilateral and multilateral agreements, most notably the 1994 Convention on Cooperation for the Protection and Sustainable Use of the Danube River. The regional success of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes has convinced its Parties to adopt an amendment to the Convention, opening it up for accession by all States Members of the United Nations. When this amendment comes into force, that Convention will increase its importance beyond the ECE region.

22. Recognition by the international community of the importance of bilateral, regional and multilateral legal frameworks has made possible the conclusion of a number of treaties, protocols and conventions on the use, development and

protection of transboundary watercourses and related ecosystems, such as the 1960 Indus Water Treaty; the 1978 Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement; the 1991 Pakistan Water Apportionment Accord; the 1995 Agreement on the Cooperation for the Sustainable Development of the Mekong River Basin; the 1995 Protocol on Shared Watercourse Systems in the Southern African Development Community Region (revised and extended in 2000); the 1996 Mahakali and Ganges treaties; and the 2003 African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources. In addition, other multilateral environmental agreements, such as the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa and its subregional action programmes, the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (the Ramsar Convention) and the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, may not solely address water issues, but help provide an important support framework for cooperation.

23. An important step regarding transboundary aquifer management was the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 63/124, to which the 19 draft articles on the law of transboundary aquifers, which had been elaborated by the International Law Commission, were annexed. In the resolution, the Assembly encouraged the States concerned to make appropriate bilateral or regional arrangements for the proper management of their transboundary aquifers, taking into account the provisions of the draft articles. The provisions include cooperation among States to prevent, reduce and control the pollution of shared aquifers. In view of the importance of these "invisible resources", States are invited to consider the draft articles as a basis for the elaboration of a convention. A number of initiatives are also already under way (e.g., the Nubian Sandstone Aquifer System and the North-Western Sahara Aquifer System) to develop legal frameworks for individual shared aquifers.

24. Similarly, the body of law pertaining to the transboundary aspects of flood management and drought proofing is steadily growing. Various legal instruments have been devised on a bilateral and multilateral basis for all aspects of flood preparedness, response and recovery, most recently in the European Union (EU) member States through the EU directive on the assessment and management of flood risks. Model provisions on transboundary flood management have been developed and agreed under the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, and the World Meteorological Organization has elaborated a rapid legal assessment tool to assess the needs for legal reform to provide an institutional backbone for flood management in river basins.

25. Despite the proliferation of agreements on transboundary water management, there are still numerous watercourses, not to mention aquifers, without adequate legal frameworks for cooperation. Notably, more than 150 of the world's 263 international river basins, plus transboundary aquifer systems, lack any type of cooperative management framework.

26. Moreover, existing agreements are sometimes not sufficiently effective to promote integrated water resources management due to problems at the national and local levels, such as inadequate water management structures and a weak capacity in countries to implement the agreements as well as shortcomings in the agreements themselves (for example, an inadequate integration of aspects such as the

environment, the lack of enforcement mechanisms, limited sectoral scope and non-inclusion of important riparian States).

27. There is a consensus among the majority of riparian countries that transboundary agreements need to be concrete and to set out institutional arrangements for cooperation, and measures for the management and protection of water resources and related ecosystems, as well as for enforcement. Agreements must take into account water quantity and quality, hydrological events, changing basin dynamics and societal values as well as all potential impacts of climate change. They should also incorporate dispute resolution mechanisms and identify clear yet flexible means to share the benefits of water, water allocations and water-quality standards. Provisions for joint monitoring, information exchange and public participation as well as mutual assistance in case of extreme events are also crucial. Agreements should include ways to factor in risk and uncertainty, for example related to climate change. Finally, they should have provisions for encouraging water-related joint economic development activities, such as cost-sharing arrangements.

Institutional structures and capacity development

28. Appropriate institutional structures at the national, transboundary and regional levels are a precondition for the sustainable development and management of transboundary waters and for lasting cooperation among riparian States. A clear mandate for the different national and transboundary organizations is an important prerequisite for the formation of strong governing bodies.

29. Effective transboundary water management starts at the national level, where coordination and cooperation between different ministries and water-related institutions are needed, as are sufficient financing and political commitment. Some common obstacles are conflicting mandates, fragmented authority and the limited capacity of national institutions. The lack of strong political will to develop and implement the laws and agreements needed to effectively coordinate water uses within the various sectors and to manage resources in an integrated manner adds to the problem.

30. At the transboundary level, the formation of joint bodies with a strong enforcement capacity, such as river, lake and aquifer commissions, is fundamental to ensuring cooperation between the various governmental entities and to good management of shared resources. Enforcement can only be achieved if these bodies possess strong mandates and political support from the various Governments. Apart from States, a variety of actors, including local stakeholders, non-governmental organizations, research institutions, private sector participants and donors, must all be involved. Success can be found in the interaction and cooperation between the different levels and stakeholders. Vertical and horizontal integration is a necessity, and the joint bodies are the framework where such integration takes place.

31. To be effective, joint bodies should pursue the following:

- Coordination and advisory functions (e.g., collecting and exchanging hydrological data and forecasts; identifying pollution sources and hot spots; serving as a forum for the exchange of information on emerging issues, existing and planned uses of water and related installations; and conducting studies on climate change impacts)

- Policy development and implementation, including formulating joint policies, strategies and visions to implement the agreement (e.g., developing joint monitoring programmes; establishing warning and alarm procedures; setting up regimes for reservoirs and other facilities)
- Implementation and dispute settlement, including monitoring and reporting on implementation and settling differences and disputes

32. Joint bodies in the same basin with a different scope (e.g., navigation and water management, and bodies overseeing a first-order basin, main tributaries or aquifers) should develop institutional and administrative structures that facilitate cooperation. Similarly, cooperation between joint bodies with the same scope but in different areas, such as protection of inland waters and of the marine environment, makes the work of both bodies more effective.

33. Appropriate rules of procedure and terms of reference for river basin organizations that take into account specific local conditions are also crucial. These rules should not only recommend the structure, responsibilities, rights and financial status of such organizations, but also the ways and means to ensure public participation.

34. For joint bodies to be effective, their institutional and human capacities are crucial. Staffs of joint bodies should have a broad competence and skills that bridge disciplines. The capacities of managers, especially at the national and local levels, should be strengthened not only to raise an understanding of the complexities of managing shared water resources but also to derive the benefits made possible through cooperation. Negotiation, diplomacy and conflict resolution skills need to be developed and improved. The capacity to develop and implement policies and laws as well as the relevant enforcement mechanisms is vital, and should be developed accordingly; so, too, is setting up funding arrangements, both internal and external.

Integrated approach

35. Transboundary as well as national water development and management are strongly linked to sustainable and responsible growth. Thus, an integrated approach favouring long-term and contingency planning is needed, building resilience into vulnerable systems, with an emphasis on increased diversity and flexibility. New management approaches should be based on regional cooperation principles, focusing on river basins and aquifer systems. Integrated water resources management is a process that promotes coordinated and efficient development and management of water, land and related resources to maximize economic and social welfare without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems. This requires a coordinated approach, including by industry, agriculture and the water-supply infrastructure. It calls for a holistic management of surface and groundwater, implemented with the entire river basin in mind. Numerous challenges are involved, such as continuous changes in people's demands and values and structural transformations in society and the environment, not to mention climatic anomalies and other exogenous shifts. These various challenges call for multifaceted, flexible decision-making processes.

36. Many existing transboundary cooperation arrangements are highly sectoral; the majority address specific waterworks, water uses and measures to control and

regulate water flows, pollution or the environment. There is a need to revise these approaches in order to follow integrated water resources management principles. Sectoral entities should be actively used as the building blocks of an integrated approach, with the appropriate mechanisms and changes in legislation. Globally agreed targets and indicators for integrated water resources management plans are very important since such plans provide an opportunity to assess the current water situation in all its thematic and subsectoral dimensions, as well as quality and quantity aspects.[3]

Exchange of information and joint monitoring and assessment

37. Information based on well-organized measurement networks and monitoring programmes is a prerequisite for accurate assessments of water resources and problems. Assessment is essential for making informed decisions and formulating policy at the local, national and transboundary levels. Moreover, basin management by two or more countries calls for comparable information. A common basis for decision-making requires harmonized (if not standardized), compatible assessment methods and data management systems as well as uniform reporting procedures.

38. The exchange of information, including on pollution caused by accidents, on infrastructure projects that could affect downstream countries, on extreme events (floods and droughts) and on operations, such as for hydropower, navigation and irrigation, is vital to building trust and a shared vision among riparian countries. In this context, a number of key policies on the "free and unrestricted" exchange of hydrological data and products are being promoted by the World Meteorological Organization and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).[4]

39. Joint monitoring requires an agreed terminology, such as the one provided by the UNESCO/WMO International Glossary of Hydrology or the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting for Water developed by the United Nations Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat and the Division for Sustainable Development. Such terminology translates an international standard vocabulary into regionally used languages.

Participatory approach

40. Public participation is fundamental to maximize agreement, enhance transparency and decision-making, create ownership and facilitate the acceptance and enforcement of decisions and policies. It is also a mechanism for gaining a better or common understanding between the various stakeholders on the nature of a given problem and the desirability of specific outcomes. Stakeholder participation strengthens integration, thereby contributing to conflict prevention, and risk reduction, which are all highly important in large infrastructure development projects.

---

[3] UN-Water, "Status report on integrated water resources management and water efficiency plans", prepared in 2008 for the Committee on Sustainable Development, at its sixteenth session.

[4] See in particular resolution 25, on the exchange of hydrological data and products, agreed at the Thirteenth WMO Congress, and resolution XII-4, on the exchange of hydrological data and interaction, of the UNESCO International Hydrological Programme.

41. Numerous methods exist for public involvement ranging from the compilation of a stakeholders' database for network interaction to public hearings. Participation should be organized in an open and transparent way and should involve all relevant groups. Local residents, Government representatives, the research community, farmers, industries, the private sector, women and minority groups all need to be fully involved in the development of river basin, lake and aquifer strategies, agreements and institutions. Of course, numerous challenges to public participation exist as well, such as differing legislation and management and public participation systems, as well as priorities, in neighbouring countries. Frontiers frequently represent a "delimiter" not only of a linguistic but also of a cultural and socio-economic nature, and the public can be insufficiently aware of how to take part in decision-making. In addition, mechanisms of public participation are not well developed in many countries, and even less at the transboundary level. Critically, public participation requires adequate financial resources to be effective. Yet despite the difficulties, transboundary public participation efforts can be successful: witness the Convention on Cooperation for the Protection and Sustainable Use of the Danube River, the Sardar Sarovar Project and the Regional Partnership for Prevention of Transboundary Degradation of the Kura-Aras River.

Benefits and cost-sharing

42. Riparian countries should focus first on optimizing the generation of basin-wide benefits and, second, on sharing those benefits in a manner that is agreed as fair. The use of water, rather than the allocation of water itself, provides by far the best scope for identifying mutually beneficial cooperative actions. The perception by all countries that a cooperative basin development and management plan which maximizes overall benefits is "fair" is essential to motivating and sustaining cooperation. It is therefore important that consensus over basic entitlements is reached and that attention is paid to the differential distribution of costs resulting from the use of the water resources of the entire water body in question. It should be recognized, however, that due to the limited amount of overall available water in some cases, such decisions sometimes involve very difficult trade-offs and choices.

43. Payments for benefits or compensation for costs can be made in the context of cooperative arrangements. Countries can be compensated, for example, for the creation and operation of additional storage capacity by other riparian countries. This basin solidarity also might entitle upstream countries to share some portion of the downstream benefits that are generated, and thus share the costs of these practices. It is important, however, to apply a special approach to the benefits and costs that are not easily quantifiable or commensurable.

44. Payment for ecosystem services, such as for flood mitigation, regulating run-off and water supply, is a new and still contested approach. Nonetheless, if implemented well, the approach has the potential to be an environmentally effective, economically efficient and socially equitable tool for integrated water resources management, which can internalize environmental costs, broaden sources of finance and create incentives for environmentally friendly investments and behaviour.

Financing

45. Effective development and management of transboundary water resources, more and more widely understood as an international and common public good,

requires appropriate financing. The costs of developing a legal framework, establishing institutions, developing capacity, creating monitoring, data-sharing and assessment systems and — most costly of all — long-term investment programmes that optimize equitable use and protection of the shared water body need to be sustainable. The level of necessary financing varies broadly from one transboundary water resource to another, depending not only on available national budgetary resources but chiefly on the existence and strength of the specific joint body.

46. A mixture of financing mechanisms and various sources of financial resources is typically used for transboundary water management cooperation: from national budgets and external bilateral or multilateral donor-funded projects to more strategic programmes and funds or private-public partnerships (e.g., Mekong River Basin Development and Management). Investment needs in most cases exceed the resources available to riparian countries; therefore, various financing mechanisms are being developed and employed. International development banks or specialized development funds are successfully testing a number of innovative approaches such as strategic partnerships comprising regional funds, leveraging significant additional investment through these funds. Other innovative financing schemes, including regional revolving funds, payment for ecosystem services, inter-riparian financing and cost recovery of water services, could be considered as options for sustainable financing of transboundary water management institutions. However, these require strong political support, good governance and appropriate institutional structures.

IV. Contributions of the United Nations system to transboundary water cooperation

UN-Water and its activities

47. UN-Water is the United Nations inter-agency mechanism for all its agencies, departments and programmes involved in water-related issues. It is responsible for follow-up to the water- and sanitation-related internationally agreed development goals and supports Member States in their efforts to achieve national water- and sanitation-related goals and targets.

48. UN-Water acts at the global, national and regional levels, creating added value to the work and expertise of separate United Nations agencies and programmes. By helping to bring coherence and integration, UN-Water serves as the common voice of the United Nations system on water and sanitation. It improves cooperation with external partners and provides timely information on the status and trends of the world's freshwater resources. UN-Water has grown out of many years of extensive collaboration and partnership among the United Nations agencies. These efforts have contributed to the achievement of significant progress to date and have helped to bring water and water-related issues to the top of the political agenda.

49. Transboundary water issues have been identified by UN-Water as among the priority areas requiring joint action. Which solutions States will find in their competition over shared water resources and how transboundary surface and groundwaters are managed will impact upon the successful achievement of many of the Millennium Development Goals and the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. A prime objective of UN-Water in this area is to provide coherent and comprehensive information, policy advice and technical

support to countries and stakeholders so that they can better manage transboundary waters. Coordination under the aegis of UN-Water can ensure an overall unity of complementary actions and thus supply a coherent framework for the many programmes of the Organization's water-related agencies and their partners. World Water Day in 2009, with a thematic focus on transboundary water cooperation, is one such example of this common United Nations system-wide effort. The official website of UN-Water for transboundary water issues, with links to member agency sites, is: http://www.unwater.org/TFtrans.html.

50. In the area of transboundary water cooperation, efforts by UN-Water members and partners to improve coordination and share experiences enhance the overall effectiveness of their activities and thereby the services they provide to Member States.

51. The UN-Water Decade Programme on Advocacy and Communication contributes to meeting the goals of the Decade. It is responsible for communication and advocacy, bringing United Nations agencies together to develop advocacy campaigns aimed at accelerating the implementation of policy actions and measures. The office is based in Zaragoza, Spain, and is hosted by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

52. The UN-Water Decade Programme on Capacity Development is a coordination and capacity development programme hosted by the United Nations University. Its mission is to enhance the coherence and effectiveness of UN-Water by strengthening its capacity development programmes. The Programme pursues two main activities concerning transboundary waters. It will create a single-point-of-access database to transboundary water-related capacity development activities, accessible to all UN-Water members, partners and other important water management stakeholders. An expert workshop was organized in 2008, with an emphasis on "successful cases" — the practical achievements of institutions with respect to developing feasible institutional structures, in tackling the challenges involved in managing transboundary waters and in developing the capacity required to do so. The main outcome will be a detailed compendium and analysis of successful institutional arrangements.

Activities of entities of the United Nations system

53. While it is beyond the scope of the present note to provide a description of the transboundary water cooperation activities of the various agencies of the United Nations system, it is useful for policymakers to bear in mind the active role of the agencies in providing technical cooperation and normative advice to transboundary institutions and Member States sharing water bodies. Such assistance includes development law services to help member countries establish a legal and institutional environment conducive to stable and mutually beneficial transboundary water cooperation. Other types of cooperation strengthen the ability of the Governments of river basins to take informed decisions with regard to the management of their water resources. This objective is being achieved through the development of information products that integrate technical water resources and water use data with agricultural, demographic, socio-economic and environmental data.

54. The United Nations also assists Member States by supporting governance reform processes in over 35 shared water bodies to establish priorities, adopt policy

legal and institutional reforms in sectors facing degradation or conflicts, and test the feasibility of various investments to address conflicts and reverse degradation. More than 150 countries currently benefit from the technical assistance and transboundary water cooperation provided by the United Nations system.

Inter-agency coordination on transboundary waters

55. Recognizing the importance of transboundary water management, UN-Water created a Task Force on Transboundary Waters in 2008, coordinated by UNESCO and ECE, which was subsequently transformed into a continuing long-term Thematic Priority Area of UN-Water in February 2010.

56. The Thematic Priority Area on Transboundary Waters seeks to provide a platform to promote coherence and coordination of activities by UN-Water members and partners in the area of transboundary waters by facilitating a continuous exchange of information, experiences and lessons learned and by promoting joint efforts. The Task Force aims to act as a clearing house for good practices for transboundary water cooperation and to provide a single entry point to the initiatives of UN-Water members.

57. Since its creation in 2008, the Thematic Priority Area has worked to promote coherence and coordination of member activities in the field of transboundary water management and to raise the political profile of transboundary water management. Achievements in the 2008-2009 workplan include the production and printing of a policy brief, the coordination and preparation of activities for World Water Day 2009, focusing on transboundary water cooperation, and involvement in the World Water Week held in 2008 and 2009. In October 2009, an in-depth mapping exercise was undertaken in order to better understand the activities of UN-Water members and partners in this area. This will be an important basis for further improving cooperation, coordination and coherence and for eventually facilitating the access of Governments to the various services that United Nations agencies and partners provide.

58. The Thematic Priority Area also contributes to the global policy debate on water-related issues through active participation in global policy forums and events, such as the World Water Week 2009 or the World Water Day 2009.

59. The Thematic Priority Area therefore aims to ensure that transboundary waters are high on the political agenda, for example, through the upcoming high-level dialogue of the General Assembly. The Thematic Priority Area plans to pursue this aim through the production and dissemination of products such as fact sheets illustrating best practices, challenges and possible solutions for cooperation on transboundary waters, as well as briefs highlighting key issues of the United Nations system regarding transboundary waters. These will be launched at such international events as the sixth World Water Forum, to be held in 2012.

60. The Thematic Priority Area currently engages with the following UN-Water members and partners:

- Convention on Biological Diversity
- Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
- Global Environment Facility

- International Atomic Energy Agency
- Ramsar Convention
- Stockholm International Water Institute
- United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
- United Nations Development Programme
- Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
- Economic Commission for Africa
- Economic Commission for Europe
- United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
- United Nations Environment Programme
- The UN-Water Decade Programme on Advocacy and Communication
- Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation
- United Nations University
- UN-Water Decade Programme on Capacity Development
- World Health Organization
- World Meteorological Organization
- Worldwide Fund for Nature

V. Conclusions and recommendations

61. **Transboundary waters connect populations of different countries. They constitute an important resource for millions of people and create security, environment, political and socio-economic interdependencies. Transboundary river basins cover more than 40 per cent of the land surface on Earth. The reasonable and equitable use of transboundary waters is therefore a major challenge for peace and security worldwide, and inter-State distribution of water presents a particular challenge to countries with arid or semi-arid climates. In the past, cooperation on shared waters clearly prevailed over conflict; however, in order to keep this balance in a future world characterized by climate change impacts, population growth and increased economic development, the recommendations set out below should be implemented.**

62. **Countries that have not yet done so should ratify the 1997 Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses, and those located in the ECE region should also ratify the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes and its amendments, opening up the Convention to all States Member of the United Nations.**

63. **Where not yet existing, agreements comprising all riparian countries should be concluded on transboundary surface waters and groundwaters, including a permanent institutional structure for cooperation, provisions on**

water quality and quantity as appropriate, the exchange of data and public participation.

64. **As a precondition for effective transboundary water cooperation, water management needs to be improved at the national level, following the principles of integrated water resources management and overcoming common obstacles such as conflicting mandates, fragmented authority and the limited capacities of national institutions. In this regard, further capacity-building is necessary.**

65. **Countries should pursue an integrated approach to water management, building resilience in vulnerable systems, overcoming the currently often sectoral approaches. This implies coordinating land and water policies, industry, agriculture, forestry, water supply infrastructure, navigation and other water-related sectors.**

66. **The exchange of data and joint or at least harmonized monitoring and assessment among all riparian countries represent the basis and a possible starting point for effective transboundary water management.**

67. **Public participation in transboundary water management should be promoted in order to enhance transparency, create ownership and facilitate the acceptance and enforcement of decisions and policies.**

68. **Increased financing from a variety of public and private sources needs to be made available to create and maintain the physical and institutional structures needed for effective transboundary water management.**

69. **When engaging in transboundary water cooperation, countries should focus on optimizing the generation of basin-wide benefits and on sharing these benefits (as well as costs, eventually) in a manner that is agreed as fair by all riparian countries.**

70. **Little attention has been paid to transboundary cooperation during the International Decade for Action "Water for Life", 2005-2015, so far. The recommendations set out below may help to raise the level of attention given to this important issue in the future.**

71. **Since financial contributions and commitments to advance the goals of the Decade have been limited so far, fund-raising appeals will be needed for the second half of the Decade, aimed at all stakeholders, such as Governments, non-governmental organizations and private foundations.**

72. **Member States may wish to consider setting up national mechanisms or designating focal points in their respective countries to facilitate and promote the transboundary aspects of the Decade.**

73. **Special focus needs to be placed on Africa's water development and management, including transboundary water cooperation, if the goals of the Decade are to be achieved in that region.**

74. **Member States, national and international organizations, major groups and the private sector are urged to make voluntary contributions in accordance with the guidelines for international years and anniversaries, including for activities related to transboundary water cooperation.**

75. **Interested stakeholders, such as international and regional organizations and non-governmental groups, are encouraged to link their water-related activities to the Decade and may wish to consider new partnerships related to transboundary waters.**

76. **Links with related initiatives undertaken by all stakeholders as well as major international events planned on transboundary water cooperation during the second half of the Decade should be strongly encouraged so that the Decade will involve all stakeholders in and outside of the United Nations system.**

United Nations A/64/692/Corr.1

General Assembly

Distr.: General
22 March 2010

Original: English

Sixty-fourth session
Agenda item 53 (a)
Sustainable development: implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development

Water, peace and security: transboundary water cooperation

Note by the Secretariat

Corrigendum

Paragraph 22

The paragraph *should read*

22. Recognition by the international community of the importance of bilateral, regional and multilateral legal frameworks has made possible the conclusion of a number of treaties, protocols and conventions on the use, development and protection of transboundary watercourses and related ecosystems, such as the 1960 Indus Water Treaty; the 1978 Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement; the 1995 Agreement on the Cooperation for the Sustainable Development of the Mekong River Basin; the 1995 Protocol on Shared Watercourse Systems in the Southern African Development Community Region (revised and extended in 2000); and the 2003 African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources. In addition, other multilateral environmental agreements, such as the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa and its subregional action programmes, the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (the Ramsar Convention) and the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, may not solely address water issues, but help provide an important support framework for cooperation.

10-28319 (E) 230310

Please recycle

United Nations A/64/693

General Assembly

Distr.: General
4 March 2010

Original: English

Sixty-fourth session
Agenda item 53 (a)
Sustainable development: implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development

Organization of the midterm comprehensive review of the International Decade for Action, "Water for Life" 2005-2015

Note by the Secretary-General*

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 64/198, in which the Assembly, inter alia, requested the Secretary-General to submit to it, at its sixty-fourth session, a note on the organization of the midterm comprehensive review of the International Decade for Action, "Water for Life", 2005-2015. In that resolution, the Assembly also recalled its resolution 55/196, by which it proclaimed 2003 the International Year of Freshwater, and its resolution 58/217, by which it proclaimed 2005-2015 the International Decade for Action, "Water for Life", to commence on 22 March 2005. In the latter resolution, the Assembly stated the goals of the Decade, and called upon the relevant United Nations bodies, the specialized agencies, regional commissions and other organizations of the United Nations system to deliver a coordinated response, utilizing existing resources and voluntary funds to make 2005-2015 a decade of action. The present note outlines the activities that have been prepared for the midterm review of the decade and provides recommendations to Member States on the way forward.

* The present note was prepared by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in collaboration with UN-Water, the inter-agency mechanism designated by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, through its High-level Committee on Programmes, as the coordinating mechanism in the United Nations system for follow-up action in the area of water resources and sanitation.

10-26045 (E) 170310

Please recycle

Contents

		Page
I.	Introduction	3
II.	Background	4
III.	Intergovernmental processes at the midpoint of the International Decade "Water for Life"	4
IV.	Programmes and activities of the United Nations system	6
V.	Regional initiatives	9
VI.	Assistance to country programmes	13
VII.	Communications strategy	14
VIII.	Partnership initiatives	17
IX.	Conclusions and recommendations	20

I. Introduction

1. Recognizing that progress needed to be accelerated towards the internationally agreed development goals related to water and sanitation, the General Assembly, in its resolution 58/217, designated 2005-2015 as the International Decade for Action, "Water for Life", to commence on 22 March 2005, and also recalled its resolution 55/196, in which it declared 2003 the International Year of Freshwater.

2. In this regard, by its resolution 59/228, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it, at its sixtieth session, a report on the activities that he and relevant organizations of the United Nations system planned for the Decade. The report was submitted (A/60/158) to the Assembly, but was not discussed.

3. By its resolution 58/217, the General Assembly decided that the goals of the Decade should be achieving a greater focus on the implementation of water-related programmes and projects, while striving to ensure the participation and involvement of women in water-related development efforts and the furtherance of cooperation at all levels in order to help to achieve the internationally agreed water-related goals.

4. The General Assembly also called upon the relevant United Nations bodies, the specialized agencies, the regional commissions and other organizations of the United Nations system to deliver a coordinated response, utilizing existing resources and voluntary funds to make 2005-2015 truly a decade of action.

5. In its resolution 64/198, the General Assembly welcomed the activities related to the implementation of the first half of the Decade undertaken by Member States, the Secretariat and the organizations of the United Nations system, inter alia, through inter-agency work, as well as contributions from major groups, and emphasized the importance of further country-level implementation of the Decade.

6. In the same resolution, the General Assembly encouraged Member States, the Secretariat, organizations of the United Nations system, through their coordination mechanism, and major groups to continue their efforts to achieve the internationally agreed water-related goals contained in Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21, the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

7. The Millennium Declaration committed Governments around the world to a clear agenda for combating poverty, hunger, illiteracy, disease, discrimination against women and environmental degradation. In the area of water resources, Heads of State and Government pledged in 2000 to reduce by half the proportion of people who are unable to reach, or to afford, safe drinking water by 2015 and to stop the unsustainable exploitation of water resources.

8. Additional goals adopted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development are aimed at developing integrated water resource management and water efficiency plans by 2005 and at halving the proportion of people who do not have access to basic sanitation by 2015.

9. The primary goal of the "Water for Life" Decade is to promote efforts to fulfil international commitments made on water and water-related issues by 2015, to be in point of fact a decade of action. This represents the second international decade on

water-related issues organized by the United Nations, succeeding the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade, 1981-1990.

10. UN-Water, the United Nations system-wide mechanism for achieving coherence and coordination in the water-related activities of the relevant agencies and programmes of the United Nations system, was established by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination through its High-level Committee on Programmes in 2004.

11. During the first half of the Decade, each country has adopted its own approach to organizing activities in line with national development plans and policies and with regional and global agreements. For example, in the case of African countries, national water initiatives in the first half of the Decade have been guided by the African Ministerial Council on Water, which receives guidance from the African Union. At its request, the Council receives technical support and advice from the regional arm of UN-Water in Africa.

12. The present note, in support of the midterm comprehensive review of the Decade, provides information on the activities of the first half of the Decade and provides particulars available at the midpoint of the Decade on some of the international, regional and national activities that are being planned for the second half.

II. Background

13. Public awareness of the importance of the use and management of freshwater resources for achieving sustainable development increased dramatically in recent years as a result of a number of ongoing international and national initiatives and activities that led up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002. Water and sanitation issues were high on the agenda at the meeting in Johannesburg. The International Year of Freshwater, 2003, was well timed to follow up on recommendations for action on water and sanitation made at the Millennium Summit and the Johannesburg Summit.

14. During the "Water for Life" Decade, special emphasis is being placed on ensuring the participation and involvement of women in water-related development efforts, as called for by the General Assembly in resolution 64/198. The challenge of the Decade is to focus attention on action-oriented activities and policies that ensure the long-term sustainable management of water resources, in terms of both quantity and quality, and include measures to improve sanitation. Achieving the goals of the "Water for Life" Decade will require sustained commitment, cooperation and investment on the part of all stakeholders during the second half of the Decade from 2010 to 2015 and beyond.

III. Intergovernmental processes at the midpoint of the International Decade "Water for Life"

15. In its resolution 58/217, the General Assembly decided that the goals of the Decade should support the achievement of internationally agreed water-related goals contained in Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21, the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the Johannesburg Plan

of Implementation, and, as appropriate, those identified by the Commission on Sustainable Development.

16. At the eleventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development in 2003, the special themes selected for the first implementation cycle following the World Summit on Sustainable Development were water resources, sanitation and human settlements. The twelfth session, in 2004, provided an exhaustive review of the current state of implementation of policies and practices to meet the internationally agreed goals in water and sanitation.

17. At its thirteenth session, in 2005, the Commission on Sustainable Development explored policy options for furthering implementation on the issues of water and sanitation, as well as on human settlements. The final decision of the Commission, contained in its resolution 13/1, provided a framework within which Governments and the organizations of the United Nations system, working in partnership with major groups and other stakeholders, could take action in the areas of water and sanitation. Options were presented on access to basic water services; integrated water resources management; access to basic sanitation; sanitation and hygiene education; and wastewater collection, treatment and reuse.

18. Resolution 13/1 also provided a range of measures and approaches to address water, sanitation and human settlements in an integrated manner, taking into account economic, social and environmental aspects, related sectoral policies and cross-cutting issues as identified at the eleventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. A user-friendly matrix was developed in this process to highlight policy options, possible actions and case studies (see http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/csd13/matrix.pdf). Both the resolution and the matrix were used as guidelines for action during the first half of the "Water for Life" Decade.

19. At its sixteenth and seventeenth sessions, the Commission on Sustainable Development reviewed water as a cross-cutting issue with reference to the themes of the Commission for those sessions, namely drought, desertification, land, agriculture and Africa.

20. In 2010, as part of the midterm comprehensive review process of the Decade, as called for by the General Assembly in its resolution 64/198, the President of the General Assembly has taken the initiative to hold a high-level interactive dialogue on 22 March 2010, World Water Day. The dialogue is expected to begin with a plenary session with opening statements and a video-link to the World Water Day celebrations in Nairobi.

21. The plenary will be followed by three successive panel discussions on the themes: water and the internationally agreed development goals; water: climate change and disasters; and water and peace and security. The outcome will be a non-negotiated summary by the President of the General Assembly.

22. As welcomed by the General Assembly in its resolution 64/198, in June 2010 the Government of Tajikistan will host a high-level international conference in Dushanbe for a midterm review of the "Water for Life" Decade.

23. The conference, to which the Government of Tajikistan is inviting Heads of State and Government, is expected to open with a plenary session with formal statements, to be followed by six successive interactive round-table discussions on

six themes: water and the internationally agreed development goals; water and the gender-related development goals; water and climate change; water and disasters; transboundary water cooperation; and capacity-building for integrated water resources management. The proposed three-day format is expected to allow for deeper discussions and a greater consideration of diverse regional and subregional challenges under each of the three themes.

24. On each theme, depending on the number of participants at the conference, several round tables will be held, with differing regional compositions to allow for a diversity of perspectives and views.

25. The Government of Tajikistan has formally requested Member States, entities of the United Nations system and the United Nations coordination mechanism, UN-Water, to provide technical cooperation and financial assistance in the organization of the conference.

26. In February 2010, at the twelfth meeting of the senior programme managers in Hamilton, Canada, UN-Water decided, for reasons of coherence and complementarity, and in the spirit of "Delivering as One", as called for by the Secretary-General, to channel all technical assistance from its members and programmes for the conference through the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Tajikistan.

27. Through the Resident Coordinator, UN-Water has created an ad hoc open-ended working group to mobilize and coordinate the technical cooperation efforts of the members and partners of UN-Water for the conference. The working group will be supported through the two UN-Water offices located in Zaragoza, Spain, and Bonn, Germany. UN-Water will also help publicize the conference and its outcome, particularly through its communications activities.

28. The Government of Tajikistan has announced that it will present the outcome of the high-level international conference in Dushanbe to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session.

IV. Programmes and activities of the United Nations system

A. UN-Water[1]

29. During the first half of the "Water for Life" Decade, 2005-2009, UN-Water was the central coordinator for the activities of the organizations of the United Nations system. The UN-Water terms of reference and modalities of work cover the elements of a detailed inter-agency plan for addressing water and sanitation issues, and also include mechanisms for interacting with stakeholders that are not members of the United Nations system. The chairmanship of UN-Water, which rotates among

[1] The work of UN-Water encompasses all aspects of freshwater, including surface and groundwater resources and the interface between freshwater and seawater. It includes freshwater resources, in terms of both quality and quantity, their development, assessment, management, monitoring and use (including, for example, domestic uses, agriculture and ecosystem requirements). The scope of work also includes sanitation, including both access to and use of sanitation by populations and the interactions between sanitation and freshwater. It further includes water-related disasters, emergencies and other extreme events and their impact on human security.

its members, is currently held by the United Nations University, while the Department of Economic and Social Affairs acts as the secretariat. Information on UN-Water can be found at http://www.unwater.org.

30. UN-Water has defined a number of thematic initiatives for its work over the Decade, which include: coping with water scarcity and pollution; sanitation, safe drinking water and health; gender mainstreaming in water and sanitation; integrated water resources management; transboundary water issues; and disaster risk reduction. Africa was selected as a geographical focus owing to its exceptional needs in water and sanitation. A series of policy briefs have been released by UN-Water during the Decade in order to reflect its thematic initiatives.

31. One of the four programmes of UN-Water is the World Water Assessment Programme, hosted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which provides the background assessment for and produces the *World Water Development Report*. The first edition of the report, *Water for People, Water for Life*, was launched at the Third World Water Forum, in Kyoto, Japan, in March 2003 (see www.world.water-forum3.com/), the second edition was launched at the Fourth World Water Forum, in Mexico City, in March 2006, and the third edition, *Water in a Changing World*, was launched at the Fifth World Water Forum, in Istanbul, on 22 March 2009. The fourth edition, *Managing Water under Conditions of Uncertainty and Risk*, will be launched in 2012.

32. UN-Water's World Water Assessment Programme provides comprehensive information and analysis on the current state of the world's water resources and potential policy solutions, bringing together relevant inputs from Governments, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and the private sector. Information on participation in the programme is available at http://www.unesco.org/water/wwap/index.shtml.

33. Two other UN-Water programmes were launched in the first half of the Decade: the Programme on Capacity Development, located in Bonn and hosted by the United Nations University, and the Programme on Advocacy and Communication, located in Zaragoza and hosted by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

34. The UNICEF/World Health Organization (WHO) Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation operates under the umbrella of UN-Water and reports on a regular basis since 1991 on the status of water supply and sanitation (see sect. IV.D below).

35. A number of activities coordinated under UN-Water have cross-linkages with UN-Oceans, another water-oriented coordinating mechanism, which was also set up under the Chief Executives Board for Coordination to strengthen the coordination and cooperation of United Nations activities related to oceans and coastal areas. The cross-linkages between UN-Water and UN-Oceans include the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities and activities for the benefit of small island developing States (see http://www.un-oceans.org). Linkages between UN-Water and UN-Energy are also developing, particularly on the emerging challenges in the water-energy nexus.

B. Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation

36. The Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation was established by Secretary-General Kofi Annan in order to give advice, galvanize global action and raise awareness on water and sanitation issues, to help mobilize funds for water and sanitation projects and to encourage new partnerships as part of international efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve the agreed development goals in water and sanitation.

37. The Advisory Board, chaired by Prince Willem-Alexander of Orange, includes a wide range of eminent persons, technical experts, stakeholders from civil society and other knowledgeable individuals with experience in inspiring people, moving the machinery of government and working with the media, the private sector and civil society.

38. UN-Water and the Advisory Board work closely in providing a coordinated response from the United Nations system, involving Member States and civil society. In 2010, the Board released the second version of its Hashimoto action plan, in which it proposes policies, strategies and actions in five areas: financing; sanitation; monitoring and reporting; integrated water resources management; and water and disaster.

C. United Nations Inter-agency Task Force on Gender and Water

39. In 2003, the Inter-agency Network on Women and Gender Equality established the Inter-agency Task Force on Gender and Water, with the Division for Sustainable Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs as task manager. UN-Water also supported the creation of the Task Force, thus linking gender focal points and water focal points in each agency. Currently the Task Force, which comprises 18 United Nations programmes and agencies, 5 non-United Nations entities and 2 observers, reports annually to the Inter-agency Network on Women and Gender Equality and semi-annually to UN-Water, which, at its twelfth meeting of senior programme managers, reaffirmed gender and water as a cross-cutting strategic thematic focus area, which status it will maintain in UN-Water into the second half of the Decade.

40. The Task Force submitted a paper, entitled "A gender perspective on water and sanitation" (see http://www.un.water.org/downloads/bground_2.pdf), to the thirteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development in April 2005. The paper provided content for much of the discussion on the cross-cutting issue of gender in water and sanitation. In 2008, in coordination with the UN-Water Programme on Capacity-Building, the Task Force held an expert workshop on gender and water statistics, which produced several technical recommendations that were fed back into the United Nations statistical community.

D. Joint monitoring programme for water supply and sanitation

41. WHO and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) actively contribute to global water supply and sanitation monitoring and information dissemination through their joint monitoring programme under the umbrella of UN-Water. Coverage figures produced by the programme are the official reference data for the

United Nations system, including with regard to the goals contained in the Millennium Declaration and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

42. In the 2008 report, "Progress in Drinking-water and Sanitation", the joint monitoring programme presented coverage data for most countries of the world as of 2006 (see www.wssinfo.org). The figures revealed the glaring contrasts between rich and poor nations and between rural and urban populations in the poorest countries. Its latest report is scheduled to be released in March 2010.

43. For its coverage estimates, the joint monitoring programme uses nationally representative household surveys such as the demographic and health survey, the UNICEF multiple indicator cluster surveys and the WHO global health survey, as well as other reliable country surveys and national censuses that allow for the comparison of data. The initial database provided country, global and regional coverage estimates, disaggregated by service type and by urban and rural areas, for 1990 and 2002. The 2006 report updated coverage estimates to 2004 as a baseline for the "Water for Life" Decade.

E. Global Annual Assessment on Sanitation and Drinking-Water

44. The UN-Water Global Annual Assessment on Sanitation and Drinking-Water reports on the capacity of countries to make progress towards the Millennium Development Goal on water and sanitation and on the effectiveness of external support agencies to facilitate this process. The assessment has been designed in response to the need to reduce the reporting burden and harmonize different reporting mechanisms of the Member States of the Organization. The assessment also increases the comprehensiveness and accountability of information on the drinking-water and sanitation sectors. The initiative is technically coordinated by WHO.

F. United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

45. The aim of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction is to mobilize Governments, United Nations agencies, regional bodies, the private sector and civil society to unite efforts in building resilient societies by developing a culture of prevention and preparedness. The "Water for Life" Decade has the same time frame as the Hyogo Framework for Action: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters, adopted at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in Kobe, Japan, in 2005. This synergy provides a unique opportunity to strengthen understanding of how the management of risk related to disasters should be linked to water resources management.

V. Regional initiatives

46. UN-Water, which includes the secretariats of all five United Nations regional commissions as members, encourages regional inter-agency networking arrangements between the regional commissions and regional offices of the various United Nations agencies. The first regional UN-Water initiative was established by the Economic Commission for Africa, which has been developing a workplan of

activities for UN-Water/Africa. The workplan provides a good model for the work of UN-Water in other regions.

A. Economic Commission for Africa

47. Africa's share of global freshwater resources, 10 per cent, closely matches its share of world population, 12 per cent, but the distribution of this resource is uneven, including areas of severe aridity, such as the Sahara and Sahel in the north and the Kalahari in the south, to areas of abundant water resources, such as the Congo basin, which is estimated to have 50 per cent of Africa's freshwater. The continent suffers from one of the most unstable rainfall regimes in the world. The extremes of shortage and excess of water result in different forms of socio-economic insecurity.

48. In the field of water policy, strategy and institutional arrangements, a number of advances have been made in African countries. There is an increasing commitment to water policy reform and a strong trend towards decentralization of water institutions. The main goal of UN-Water in Africa is to ensure coherence and foster joint action by all United Nations agencies active in the water sector in Africa, particularly during the "Water for Life" Decade. The main activities on the UN-Water work programme in Africa are:

(a) Advocacy for raising the profile of water issues targeted towards policymakers: UN-Water organized the Pan African Implementation and Partnership Conference on Water under the auspices of the African Ministerial Council on Water in Addis Ababa in December 2003, at which Africa's priority implementation needs and required actions were defined. The major outcomes formed the basis of the work programme of many African countries in water and sanitation. Based on an action plan developed and approved by the Executive Committee of the African Ministerial Council on Water in June 2005, policy priority has been given to the role of gender in water resources management in Africa. Detailed information is available at www.uneca.org/awich;

(b) Monitoring of progress in implementing regional and global programmes: UN-Water initiated a biannual *African Water Development Report*, based on reports at the basin and the national and subregional levels. A final version of the report, covering 30 countries, was released in September 2005;

(c) Improving access to information on African water resources: UN-Water has set up the African Water Information Clearing House, a continent-wide information system backed up by subregional networks of water and geo-information specialists and institutions.

49. With Africa designated as the geographic focus of UN-Water, the activities described above are expected to make a significant contribution to improving the development and utilization of Africa's water resources for socio-economic development, and thus to progress in reaching the goals of the "Water for Life" Decade.

B. Economic Commission for Europe

50. Integrated water resources management in the Economic Commission for Europe region, with more than 150 major transboundary rivers, over 100 transboundary groundwater aquifers and about 30 international lakes, requires joint action among the countries that share basins, including the establishment of joint bodies such as river commissions. In February 2005, at the sixtieth annual session of the Economic Commission for Europe, a framework for policies, strategies and action on water and sanitation covering the period until 2015 was agreed upon. The policies and actions that form the response of the Commission to the challenges of the Decade are based on its 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes and its two Protocols, on water and health and on civil liability for damage caused by industrial accidents. These regional legal instruments set goals and tasks for countries and institutions that are responsible for integrated water resources management in a transboundary context. The provisions of the European Union water framework directive and some 150 bilateral and multilateral agreements supplement these instruments.

51. The contributions of the Economic Commission for Europe to the Decade include research and capacity-building support in such technical areas as flood management, protection of water-related ecosystems, groundwater management and monitoring and assessment of transboundary waters. Activities in these areas were carried out in cooperation with UNESCO, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), WHO, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and others.

C. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

52. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean conducts research and disseminates information on the economic and institutional aspects of water resources management in the countries of that region. It also provides advice on water legislation and regulation of water utilities and cooperates with a number of global and regional projects, such as the Global Water Partnership and Visión Andina, assessing the impact of trade and investment agreements on water and water utilities.

53. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean publishes the newsletter of the Network for Cooperation in Integrated Water Resource Management for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean twice a year, in English and Spanish. Organizations involved in the technical network include private and public water resources management institutions. The Network's goal is to improve the capacity for multiple-use management of water resources in diverse dimensions (institutional, administrative, economic-financial, legal and technical), through exchange of information and direct cooperation between its members (more information on the Network and the Commission's work programme and publications on water resources can be found at http://www.eclac.cl/drni/).

D. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

54. The Asia and the Pacific region is home to more than two thirds of the world's population and, on average, over 80 per cent of deaths caused by natural disasters annually takes place in the region. As part of its activities related to the "Water for Life" Decade, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific initiated two major programmes in 2004 and 2005: (a) the application of strategic planning and management to assist developing countries in the preparation of integrated water resources management plans, with emphasis on eradicating poverty and meeting the goals of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and (b) integrating disaster risk management into water resources management.

55. The programme on integrated water resources management builds on the results of case studies in 17 developing countries that applied the guidelines on strategic planning and management of water resources developed earlier by the Commission. The case studies were carried out in 2003 and 2004 as part of a regional project funded through the Development Account. This programme supports the implementation of the integrated water resources management component of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation within the framework of the "Water for Life" Decade.

56. The programme on water-related disaster risk management links the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action, to the "Water for Life" Decade. The programme builds on the Commission's existing subregional networks on hydrology, meteorology and disaster risk management, especially the Typhoon Committee and the Panel on Tropical Cyclones. The integration of disaster risk management into the management of water resources includes improvements in multi-hazard mapping and warning systems and the enhancement of disaster preparedness at the local, national and regional levels, as well as the promotion of community-based disaster risk management practices. The region's developed and developing countries are learning from one another's experience, for example, through the annual hydrological workshops of the Typhoon Committee.

E. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

57. The Western Asia region has always experienced a low level of natural water availability, especially in arid or extremely arid climatic zones. Rapid population growth, unsustainable water use and increasing pollution levels further contribute to water scarcity problems in the region. Moreover, most water resources used in the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia region, both surface water and groundwater, are shared by several riparian countries.

58. To address these challenges, the Committee initiated several activities in 2004 and 2005 as part of preparations for the "Water for Life" Decade, mainly in building capacity for shared water resources management and integrated water resources management. A training manual for the region was prepared, addressing the integration of water policies, institutional and legislative tools and the administrative methods required for integrated water resources management.

59. On the issue of shared water resources, several pilot areas (relating to surface water and groundwater resources) were studied to serve as models for reaching agreements on sharing resources and promoting joint technical and managerial

cooperation among the riparian countries. A series of workshops was held to assist Member States in enhancing their negotiation capacity and skills and promoting conflict resolution in the region. The Commission also focused on the sustainable management of shared groundwater resources, especially in the many countries where groundwater is the main source of water. Emphasis has been placed on integrating specific policies for groundwater management into policies at the basin level.

VI. Assistance to country programmes

60. The coherence of the actions of the United Nations system at the country level is crucial to achieving the overall objectives of the "Water for Life" Decade. UN-Water is encouraging exchanges of information and dialogue on policymaking on water and sanitation issues within the United Nations system and with external partners and stakeholders. Such cooperation is essential in efforts to incorporate the water agenda in country-level exercises and processes such as the common country assessment, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and poverty reduction strategy papers.

61. As part of the actions taken for the "Water for Life" Decade, UNDP and the World Bank have undertaken a joint initiative to identify a few key areas in the water and sanitation sector in areas where the two organizations would benefit from closer collaboration. The focus of the work is on the need to support countries in scaling up their efforts to reach the water and sanitation targets.

62. The UNDP Water Governance Programme and the World Bank's Water and Sanitation Programme are working together to develop rural and urban initiatives in water supply and sanitation. Both programmes can influence large-scale investments to focus more on poverty-reduction targets and encourage the participation of local-level stakeholders in decision-making processes to ensure more equitable distribution of investment benefits. Both programmes promote governance (policy, legal, regulatory and institutional reform) and build capacities at the national and local levels, and both provide similar structures for service delivery, including regional and country offices.

63. UNDP places poverty eradication at the centre of its work on water supply, sanitation and human settlements, with an overall investment of over $400 million in grants. Through this work, UNDP, with a variety of partners, has produced replicable results in providing access to affordable drinking water and sanitation to the poor in peri-urban and rural areas. The Water Governance Programme focuses on addressing local capacity constraints in order to improve access to water and sanitation and operates at the local and national levels.

64. At the national level, UNDP facilitates communication and coordination among the multiple actors dealing with water resources. UNDP and its partners have been facilitating country-level action for the preparation of plans for integrated water resources management and for promoting the participation of multiple stakeholders in the implementation of water resources management practices.

65. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs provides policy advice at the national level, particularly through its technical advisory services, to developing countries, in particular least developed countries and small island developing States,

for strengthening institutional capacity to develop integrated water resources management and water efficiency plans, encouraging the participation of all stakeholders.

66. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has developed training materials for users at all levels to promote better use of water in agriculture as part of its activities for the "Water for Life" Decade. Areas covered include educational approaches aimed at farmers and farm communities; technical materials for irrigation professionals; irrigation scheme management training courses; and policy advice in agricultural water management. In addition, FAO is promoting more sustainable agricultural practices, with a view to reducing negative environmental impacts and water pollution, through its integrated plant-nutrient and pest-management programmes. These practices are applied in member countries through technical assistance and South-South cooperation programmes and projects.

67. UNICEF continues to expand its water, sanitation and hygiene programmes, supporting activities in some 93 countries, ranging from national policy development to direct support for improved service delivery in focus areas. UNICEF interventions focus on expanding programmes that promote improved hygiene and sanitation, while maintaining support for improved water-supply services.

68. UNICEF supported water, sanitation and hygiene education programmes for schools in some 76 countries in the first half of the Decade and plans to expand the programme during the second half of the Decade. Components include hygiene education and teacher education in hygiene in primary schools; construction of new water and sanitation facilities in schools; developing and promoting child- and girl-friendly facility designs; and promoting hygienic behaviour change in communities.

69. WHO, working with its partners, is developing a suite of tools to assist countries in assessing the health impacts of water and sanitation and to assess the costs and impacts (both health and non-health) of policy and technical alternatives to support and inform intersectoral policy dialogue. The tools were launched during the first year of the Decade and are being progressively updated and expanded as the Decade progresses.

VII. Communications strategy

70. The "Water for Life" Decade draws on much of the work initiated during the International Year of Freshwater, 2003, and provides an opportunity to maintain momentum on freshwater issues. In this regard, strategic communications and coordination are crucial for the coherence and success of such efforts.

71. To support the launch of the Decade in March 2005, key messages, drafted by UN-Water in conjunction with the Department of Public Information, were circulated for discussion at a meeting of the United Nations Communications Group, which is composed of communications focal points within all United Nations agencies. Materials that were developed to support the initial launch of the Decade include a logo, a website and educational and audio-visual materials. In the second half of the Decade, responsibility for supporting communication and outreach activities of UN-Water and its members will fall increasingly to the UN-Water Decade Programme on Communication and Advocacy in Zaragoza.

72. The Programme on Communication and Advocacy has organized a series of catalytic communications initiatives, including: the UN-Water pavilion at the Zaragoza Expo 2008; support to the UN-Water exhibition area at the World Water Forum in Istanbul in 2009, which was coordinated by the UN-Water secretariat and FAO; the annual Stockholm Water Week; a journalists workshop on water and a workshop for water operators in Zaragoza; a joint event for African water officials with the Spanish fund Casa Africa in Gran Canary Island; and a series of lectures in 2010 on water quality around the world under an agreement with the Cervantes Cultural Institute.

73. The Programme has also mapped out water landmark events over the next 30 months leading up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012.

A. Logo

74. The logo for the International "Water for Life" Decade, 2005-2015, was chosen by UN-Water from several designs submitted by the Department of Public Information and an independent designer working on a pro bono basis. The logo chosen, submitted by the independent designer, is shown below.

75. The design was submitted by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to the Publications Board of the Department of Public Information in January 2005. The decision on the logo was approved by consensus through e-mail correspondence among the members of the Logo Approval Committee. The logo is intended to be used by UN-Water members, programmes and other United Nations entities on all United Nations publications and promotional materials pertaining to the Decade and can also be used by outside parties who seek permission through the online interactive form.

B. Website

76. The official website for the "Water for Life" Decade was launched on 22 March 2005 (www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/). Work is currently under way to increase content in all official United Nations languages. The website, managed by the UN-Water Programme on Advocacy and Communication, is housed and maintained at United Nations Headquarters by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in consultation with the Department of Public Information. Links to all the other member organizations of UN-Water are included. The website will be used as an awareness-raising tool and a clearing house to present activities taking

place at the international, regional and national levels with the support of members and partners of UN-Water. The website www.unwater.org provides additional information on activities of members and partners related to the Decade.

C. Promotional and educational materials and publications

77. The Department of Public Information and UN-Water produced a promotional booklet for the Decade which includes images, facts, figures and recommendations for action on a number of water-related themes. The booklet is available in English and French.

78. WHO, on behalf of UN-Water, prepared an advocacy sourcebook for the "Water for Life" Decade, to be used as a guide for local groups on how to raise awareness on water issues. It will be progressively updated in cooperation with other members and partners of UN-Water throughout the Decade to provide advocacy support on diverse themes.

79. A DVD was produced by the Department of Public Information and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs containing: the message of the Secretary-General for the Decade; an eight-minute video, *Water: the Drop of Life*; a children's video, *Splish and Splash*; and the promotional booklet for the Decade.

80. Occurring almost simultaneously with the "Water for Life" Decade is the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, 2005-2014. The synergy of these two initiatives provides a useful framework for strengthening and promoting education programmes and training projects to increase awareness and preparedness within schools, families and communities on water- and sanitation-related issues.

81. UNICEF has developed interactive learning resources for young people on water, environment and sanitation. These include a computer game of strategy and survival, entitled "Water Alert!", which includes a facilitator's guide and instructions for use in developing countries, and a user-friendly text module with an online discussion board. These resources, in English, French and Spanish, are available online and on CD at UNICEF Voices of Youth (www.unicef.org/voy).

82. The second edition of the *World Water Development Report*, prepared by the UN-Water World Water Assessment Programme, was issued in March 2006 as a major focus of the Decade's public information activities, and will be issued every three years throughout the Decade. *The African Water Development Report* is a regional report similar to the *World Water Development Report*. Subsidiary reports at the subregional and national levels have also been developed as stand-alone products for providing up-to-date information and monitoring tools.

83. In 2006, the UNICEF-WHO joint monitoring programme, operating under the umbrella of UN-Water, issued a report providing 2004 coverage on access to drinking water supply and sanitation estimates as a baseline for the Decade. The programme issued another report in 2008, and further reports to assess progress throughout the Decade in 2010. Additional reports are planned for release in 2012, 2014 and 2015.

84. The proceedings and framework for action resulting from a round table on water, sanitation and hygiene education for schools, held in Oxford, in January

2005, set out actions that must be taken to ensure that by 2015, the end of the "Water for Life" Decade, all schools receive a basic quality package of water, sanitation and hygiene education. The programme was sponsored by UNICEF and the International Water and Sanitation Centre, with the support of Oxfam Great Britain and the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council.

85. UNEP has a wide range of information products that are relevant to the observance of the "Water for Life" Decade, including the *Atlas of International Freshwater Agreements*, *Vital Water Graphics* and a diverse portfolio on coral reefs (relevant websites include www.unep.org, www.gpa.unep.org, www.unep.org/dewa/water and www.unep.org/regionalseas.

VIII. Partnership initiatives

A. Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council

86. The Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council, a multi-stakeholder organization dedicated to enhancing collaboration in the water-supply and sanitation sector, works in close cooperation with the United Nations system, including WHO, UNICEF, UN-Habitat, UNEP and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (see www.wsscc.org). The Council's Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for All programme was recognized by the Commission on Sustainable Development at its thirteenth session as an existing initiative that should be supported for countries in their pursuit of the international development goals on water and sanitation. The partnership, which involves national and regional activities in over 35 developing countries, aims to establish national coalitions and mobilize political support and action around the world on the importance of sanitation, hygiene and water in achieving these goals and in reducing poverty during the "Water for Life" Decade.

B. Global Water Partnership

87. The Global Water Partnership is a working partnership among all those involved in water management: government agencies, private companies, professional organizations, multilateral development agencies and others committed to meeting international goals related to water and sanitation. This network supports the idea that the goals of the "Water for Life" Decade can be reached only if there is collective awareness-raising on the key role of water in achieving sustainable development. The particular contribution that the Partnership makes to the Decade is to work within countries, and with the community of international organizations, to assist countries in developing integrated water resources management and water efficiency plans by 2005, as set out in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

88. To assist in this effort, the Partnership, together with the Netherlands Water Partnership, has developed the "Toolbox on integrated water resources management" to provide water-management professionals clear examples of good and bad practices and lessons learned from real-life implementation experiences. The toolbox offers a compendium of over 50 policies and actions, or tools, for putting integrated water resources management into practice, and each tool is illustrated by real cases, giving examples of how a tool has worked in a given

combination and context. The toolbox provides a range of tools which users can select or modify according to their needs and local circumstances.

C. Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

89. The Ramsar Convention has been highly supportive of the "Water for Life" Decade. On the occasion of World Wetlands Day (2 February 2005), the Ramsar secretariat invited representatives of the main environmental and aid agencies in Geneva to a debate on the theme "Natural mitigation of natural disasters". The main focus of the event was the Indian Ocean tsunami, but the debate also covered broader issues, including many related to the "Water for Life" Decade.

90. The ninth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Ramsar Convention was held in November 2005 in Kampala. The theme for 2005 was "Wetlands and water, supporting life, sustaining livelihoods". The issue of poverty alleviation was also the theme of World Wetlands Day 2006, on which occasion the messages of the Decade were further promoted.

D. Gender and Water Alliance

91. The Gender and Water Alliance, a network of over 300 organizations and individuals around the world, offers a mix of information- and knowledge-sharing initiatives, such as electronic conferencing, a website, advocacy leaflets and videos, and capacity-building and pilot programmes (see www.genderandwater.org). For the "Water for Life" Decade, the Alliance is working with partners such as UNDP, UN-Habitat and Cap-Net to develop gender strategies in the water sector and to provide training and materials to water managers on the importance of involving both women and men in the sustainable management of water and sanitation. The Alliance showcased these materials at the Fourth World Water Forum in Mexico in March 2006, and at other events. In addition, the Alliance cooperated with UN-Water in Africa in organizing a seminar on gender and water resources management in Pretoria in March 2005, where an action plan on gender and water resources management in Africa was drawn up. The plan was endorsed by the African Ministerial Council on Water and will be implemented with all major stakeholders, including the African Water Facility hosted by the African Development Bank.

E. Fourth World Water Forum, Mexico City, 2006, and Fifth World Water Forum, Istanbul, 2009

92. The World Water Forum and Ministerial Conference are initiatives of the World Water Council and host Governments, aimed at raising awareness and promoting active stakeholder discussions on water issues all over the world. As a major international event on water, the Forum seeks to enable multi-stakeholder participation and dialogue to influence water policymaking at the global and national levels, to improve living standards for people all over the world and to promote more responsible water resources use and management in line with the pursuit of sustainable development.

93. The Fourth World Water Forum, held in Mexico City in March 2006, focused on good practices and concrete field actions in five key themes under the conference slogan, "Local actions for global challenges".

94. In cooperation with the Fourth World Water Forum and the Japan Water Forum, UNICEF organized the second Children's World Water Forum as a parallel event. The focus of the proposed event is to highlight intergenerational cooperation, strengthening dialogue between policymakers and the children of the world.

95. The Fifth World Water Forum, held in Istanbul in March 2009, focused on the overarching theme of "Bridging divides for water". This theme referred not just to the geographical crossroads between Europe and Asia, the Middle East and Africa, the North and the South, but also to the barriers between modern-age and traditional water cultures and uses, between rich and poor, and between developed and developing regions of the world.

96. The theme emphasized the need for greater interaction, communication and functional harmonization of the various entities involved in or affected by water management. It also sent out a message to the water community that water is not an end in itself, but rather a means for our development and well-being. Interaction with other sectors is therefore needed to understand how water can contribute to the solution of common problems faced by all affected sectors. This was also the message of the UN-Water's third *World Water Development Report, Water in a Changing World*, which was launched at the Forum.

F. International Water Management Institute

97. The International Water Management Institute, based in Sri Lanka, implements research studies focusing on analysis of the trade-offs between water development, water management and the environment. Its new thematic structure covers water basin management; land, water and livelihoods; agriculture, water and cities; and water management and environment.

98. The Institute contributed to the Copenhagen consensus project on development by submitting proposals highlighting the lack of access to safe and affordable domestic water supply and sanitation and water for productive purposes for the rural poor. The three investment proposals presented were ranked among the best, likely to be highly cost-effective (see http://www.copenhagenconsensus.com/).

99. In 2007 the Institute published the book "Water for Food, Water for Life". This comprehensive assessment of water management in agriculture is the product of a broad partnership of practitioners, researchers and policymakers.

G. Other important partnership activities

100. The members of the International Association of Hydrogeologists, a scientific and educational non-governmental organizations, are active in promoting the theme "water for life" in their professional roles as regulators, academics and researchers on groundwater. Its members also act as advisers to United Nations agencies, Governments and other non-governmental organizations. The Association works to improve the science, policy and information base for groundwater planning by fostering cooperation and information exchange among professionals, supporting

reliable and long-term data sets. It will devote significant resources to Africa during the period 2005-2015, recognizing that technically sound groundwater management will be critical in the types of basins and aquifers that exist in Africa. More information on the Association is available at its website (www.iah.org).

101. A large number of non-governmental organizations, as well as research institutes and other entities dealing with water issues, have indicated interest in preparing and organizing activities related to the International "Water for Life" Decade and using its logo. It is expected that a strong network of interested parties will be established for the purpose of engaging in the activities related to the Decade.

IX. Conclusions and recommendations

102. **Further mobilization of resources for the implementation of actions will be needed for the second half of the Decade, with the active involvement of all stakeholders, such as Governments, including both traditional and emerging donors, non-governmental organizations and private foundations.**

103. **Member States may wish to consider setting up national mechanisms or designating focal points in their respective countries to facilitate and achieve results related to the second half of the International Decade for Action, "Water for Life", 2005-2015.**

104. **If the goals of the "Water for Life" Decade are to be achieved in Africa, and words on gender are to be put into action, during the second half of the Decade special focus needs to be placed on the region's water development and management, with the involvement of the UN-Water regional mechanism, and on gender, water and sanitation initiatives.**

105. **For the remainder of the Decade, UN-Water will continue to facilitate the coordinated system-wide response necessary for the implementation of activities in support of the "Water for Life" Decade, giving equal consideration to water and sanitation.**

106. **Member States, national and international organizations, major groups and the private sector are urged to make increased voluntary contributions to the multi-donor trust fund and programmes of UN-Water for the second half of the Decade.**

107. **Interested stakeholders, including international and regional organizations and non-governmental organizations, are encouraged to link their water-related activities to the second half of the "Water for Life" Decade and to consider new partnerships and engagement with UN-Water and its members.**